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# HOMILETICS

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BY JAMES M. <sup>arson</sup>HOPPIN

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ὅς καὶ ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, οὐ γράμματος, ἀλλὰ  
πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ γράμμα αποκτείνει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ.

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2 CORINTHIANS 3:6.

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TO  
THE ILLUSTRIOUS MEMORY  
OF  
DR. AUGUST NEANDER  
WHO  
BY HIS PROFOUND GENIUS AND VAST LEARNING  
MADE TO SPEAK AGAIN  
THE ANCIENT PREACHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH  
THIS VOLUME IS LOVINGLY INSCRIBED  
BY  
A FORMER PUPIL





## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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TRUTH, born of God, does not change ; but the forms in which it is apprehended, and its modes of influencing the mind, are continually undergoing development. The old gospel contains many new systems of theology, and it is capable of producing many new methods of preaching.

The human method of presenting divine truth so that it may be received to the welfare of the soul, must be adapted to the soul, and to the soul of an age. Preaching is a progressive art, and in this aspect it is worthy of profound study. Preaching has not lost its power (as some assert) over the human mind, any more than the gospel has lost its power, for truth always demands an interpreter, and the soul always yearns for a teacher in divine things ; but there are times, when, from inexplicable causes, preaching passes through new phases and modifications, and in that process of transition its power is obscured. The present is such a period. This is confessedly an unsettled age : theories of society, education, and science are evolved and tested with astonishing rapidity ; and it would be indeed strange if preaching did not feel the influence of the breath that has come over the intellectual world. Much that is merely extrinsic and conventional must disappear ; but the free thought and philosophic culture of the day will, in the end, pass

into, instead of diminishing, the power of preaching, and Christianity will work in and through them for its own higher ends.

The preacher cannot hope to lead and guide minds if he does in no manner comprehend the wants of an advancing age, like the present, which is one of real interest, though of fearless inquiry, in theological questions, and of the bold reconstruction of religious philosophies. The preacher can no longer successfully deal in dull learning and trite ideas, without fresh thought, original and conscientious exegesis, noble and true literary form, and, above all, practical earnestness and spiritual life. Not that the want of these has characterized the past age, but that the time has come when their absence is a marked deficiency.

Still, too much ought not to be made of the intellectual aspects of the subject, important as they are ; for, of the two classes into which Pascal divided preachers, into those who belong to the order of intellect, and those who belong to the order of love, the greatest preachers, as Pascal thought (among whom he counted Augustine), have ever been of the latter class ; for to love God is the only way to know Him and to teach Him. Truly, for one to be a great preacher, he must have a deep and pervading enthusiasm ; he must have an inward harmony with the object which interested the heart of Christ, and in which every selfish feeling is absorbed and lost. The main impulse of the preacher must be from within, from sanctified affections, from the real sympathy of his soul with God. Thought and expression—the profoundest thought and the most fit expression—are of little moment, if there is not the true, glowing heart behind them. Men, indeed, for the service of the Christian ministry, may be dwarfed by becoming accomplished scholars and



polished orators, if they are not also rendered large-hearted, courageous, spiritual, consecrated men.

While I believe that divine truth should be presented to men's minds in fresh, powerful, and beautiful forms, no less so than should scientific and literary truth, there are, nevertheless, certain principles of preaching which do not vary, and which are always true, for "the church must light its candle at the old lamp;" and an endeavor has been made in the following pages to set forth some of those true and essential principles.

This work is chiefly designed as a *text-book* in Homiletics and Pastoral Theology, for those who are in a regular course of training for the Christian ministry. While I hope that pastors may find in it something of value to themselves, it is mainly intended to be used by theological students in the class-room, for the purpose of recitation; and that will account for the broken-up and analytical style of the work, being necessitated by the treatment in condensed, rather than expanded forms of discussion of so many and varied themes.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have had another aim in publishing this book; and that is, to free myself in some measure from the routine of lecturing, and to secure time for that direct, familiar, and informal method of instruction which is peculiarly needed in treating the subject of preaching with beginners; and, indeed, I have meditated upon some new methods of teaching homiletics, which promise at least (though the result may not prove it) to be of a more quickening and truly philosophical nature than those sometimes pursued; but, at the same time, I fully recognize the necessity of a systematic course of training in this important department. "And so in art and relig-

ion. First in point of time, submit to rules ; but first in point of importance—the grand aim, indeed, of all rules—rise through them to the spirit and meaning of them. Write that upon the heart and be free ; then you can use a maxim, not like a pedant, but like an artist, not like a Pharisee, but like a Christian.”

Though happily, the true tendency of the times is to the real unity of all Christians and Christian churches, yet not because of this popular current (which is as apt to be false as true), but from deeply cherished convictions on this subject, I grow ever more inclined to honor the name of *Christian* above that of every other earthly name ; and to hold the one “ holy catholic church ” above any particular portion of it, however loved and deserving of love ; and I hope, therefore, that nothing of a narrow spirit will be found in these pages. May the time be hastened when each section of the Church shall impart to every other freely of whatever gift or portion of truth may be committed to its keeping, and when the Holy Spirit may “ gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.”

In the second part, which treats of Pastoral Theology, I have not intended to dictate what a pastor should be, but only to offer friendly suggestion and advice to young men ; thinking that, though this subject is to a great extent a matter of personal experience, much may be done to prepare candidates for the ministry for their pastoral work. That kind of preparation has been, perhaps, too much neglected heretofore in our seminaries, which have laid themselves open to the charge of rearing scholars (or attempting to do so) rather than pastors ; but it is the *pastoral work* which is the true test of ministerial character. I have endeavored to set forth a high ideal of this

character—that though no aureole surround the head of the true Christian pastor and preacher, as in old pictures, yet that sanctity and truth should crown his life with a heavenly light ; and that to the work of saving souls from the power of sin, through the preaching of the Word, the rarest faculties of mind, heart, and spirit may be devoted. If the counsels herein contained shall in the slightest degree tend to produce those strong, hardy, cross-bearing, cheerful, hopeful, wise, loving, and single-minded pastors, who are willing to labor among the poor as well as among the rich and the educated, who are willing to go anywhere, and to do anything which is required for the highest good of men, such pastors, in fine, as Christ would bless as the spiritual guides of His people into a nobler life in Him, that result would be the greatest reward I could ask.

NEW HAVEN, CONN., May, 1869.





## PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

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THIS work, which has been kindly received by the public and honored by being adopted as a text-book in several theological schools, has run through two ordinary editions, and a third smaller edition ; but in its present form it is greatly enlarged, and, in some parts, wholly rewritten. There is much of it which is entirely new. In the course of nearly twenty years of instruction upon these themes, there has been wrought, naturally, considerable modification of views. Certain aspects of truth, especially as regards the theory of preaching, tending to a more thoroughly biblical and at the same time freer spiritual expression, have presented themselves. There has seemed to be opened a profounder philosophy in the interpretation of the divine mind through preaching, that has led me to ponder deeply a remark made to me by the late Dr. Horace Bushnell, that “ of all the branches of instruction in a theological seminary he should prefer that of Homiletics as being one which dealt most directly with what God would say to men ”—as if he had said that this department is one of vital importance, that it is the consummation and test of the other departments, that it goes to the root of things and nearest the spirit and work of Christ ; and which, therefore, should not be conducted drily, nor technically, nor incidentally by being left to irregular methods, but scientifically in the best sense of

the word, and with the whole energies of a mind studious of God's teachings, and inspired by the sagacity of a higher Christian wisdom and faith. It is indeed the crown of ministerial education—the preparation of men for the prophetic office.

The original title of the book was "The Office and Work of the Christian Ministry;" but in the present edition I have thought best, for many reasons, to treat the whole subject in two separate volumes, each of them complete in itself, so that this first volume upon "Homiletics" will, it is intended, be followed by another upon "Pastoral Theology," thus comprehending the two principal themes of Practical Theology.

I then send forth this book once more with the earnest hope that it may be of aid to young men who honestly give their strength to the service of Christ in his ministry.

NEW HAVEN, CONN., October 1st, 1881.



# CONTENTS.

---

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

	PAGE
GREATNESS OF THE WORK .....	XV

---

## PART FIRST.

### HOMILETICS PROPER.

---

#### INTRODUCTION.

SEC. 1. Literature of Homiletics and Rhetoric .....	I
SEC. 2. Definition of Homiletical Terms.....	6
1. Homily .....	6
2. Homiletics .....	9
3. Preaching.....	9
4. Sermon .....	II

---

#### FIRST DIVISION.

##### HISTORY OF PREACHING.

SEC. 3. Introduction .....	13
SEC. 4. Pre-Apostolic Preaching.....	19

	PAGE
SEC. 5. Preaching of Christ and of the Apostles .....	27
SEC. 6. Preaching in the first two Centuries after Christ.....	48
SEC. 7. Preaching in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Centuries.....	58
SEC. 8. Preaching from the Sixth Century to the Reformation.....	114
SEC. 9. Preaching in the Reformation Period.....	140
SEC. 10. Preaching in different Lands since the Reformation.....	153

---

## SECOND DIVISION.

### OBJECT OF PREACHING.

SEC. 11. Object and Design of Preaching.....	243
1. Instruction.....	245
2. Persuasion .....	252
3. Edification.....	257

---

## THIRD DIVISION.

### PREPARATION FOR COMPOSING SERMON.

SEC. 12. Considerations preparatory to the Work of Preaching....	261
1. Difficulties of Preaching .....	261
2. Faults of Preaching.....	266
3. Process of Composing a Sermon.....	276

---

## FOURTH DIVISION.

### ANALYSIS AND COMPOSITION OF SERMON.

SEC. 13. The Text.....	287
SEC. 14. The Introduction.....	334
SEC. 15. The Explanation.....	353
SEC. 16. The Proposition .....	368
SEC. 17. The Division .....	380
SEC. 18. The Development .....	398
SEC. 19. The Conclusion .....	427

## FIFTH DIVISION.

## CLASSIFICATION OF SERMONS.

PAGE

SEC. 20. Classification of Sermons according to their Treatment and Form.....	444
SEC. 21. Classification of Sermons according to their Method of Delivery.....	479
1. Written Sermons.....	481
2. Memoriter Preaching.....	491
3. Extempore Preaching .....	497

## PART SECOND.

## RHETORIC APPLIED TO PREACHING.

## FIRST DIVISION.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF RHETORIC.

SEC. 22. Definition of Rhetoric.....	526
SEC. 23. Uses and Sources of Rhetoric .....	546
SEC. 24. Use of Reasoning to the Preacher .....	561
SEC. 25. Study of Language .....	583
SEC. 26. Taste in Preaching .....	612
SEC. 27. Rhetorical Criticism .....	635
SEC. 28. Elocution .....	652

## SECOND DIVISION.

## INVENTION.

SEC. 29. Definition and Sources of Invention.....	673
SEC. 30. Qualities of the true Subject .....	677
1. Unity of Subject and Object.....	677



	PAGE
2. Originality.....	679
3. Christian Truth.....	684
(1.) Christian Doctrine.....	687
(2.) Christian Morality.....	691
(3.) Christian Experience.....	718

### THIRD DIVISION.

#### STYLE.

SEC. 31. Definition of Style.....	720
SEC. 32. Absolute Properties of Style.....	724
1. Oral Properties of Language.....	725
2. Grammatical Properties of Language.....	730
SEC. 33. Relative Properties of Style.....	733
1. Subjective: as depending upon the speaker himself.	734
(1.) Appropriate Thought.....	734
(2.) Consecutive Thought.....	736
(3.) Individuality.....	737
SEC. 34. Objective: as depending upon the speaker more particu- larly in his relation to the audience.....	739
(1.) Purity.....	740
(2.) Propriety.....	749
(3.) Precision.....	750
(4.) Perspicuity.....	756
(5.) Energy.....	773
(6.) Elegance.....	793
SEC. 35. Conclusion.....	797

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

### *Greatness of the Work.*

YOUNG men who have been scientifically educated, and who are accustomed to look at questions in a purely scientific way, on coming to the preparatory studies for the Christian ministry are sometimes at a loss to know what is the nature of their duties, and how to classify themselves and their work. Their work cannot, in truth, be classified. It does not come directly under any of the sciences ; for it does not primarily concern knowledge, to which true science absolutely belongs, but has to do, first of all, with those things that belong to revelation and form the object of faith. These are, in some sense, indefinable. The sphere of the preacher, to express it in general terms, is man in his moral and spiritual relations to God ; and the task of the preacher is to know the real grandeur and vast extent of his work, and yet not to be discouraged by it.

1. The greatness of the preacher's work is seen in that he is an ambassador of God to man.

If the New Testament contains a rule of faith and conduct for men, essential for their salvation, we should expect to find in the same record that contains the faith, the appointed means of its ministration.

We could not conceive of God's giving a revelation of such import to men without at the same time distinctly

ordaining the best method of making it known to them. He would not leave this to loose, uncertain methods. If no regular divine agency had been appointed to publish the message of reconciliation between God and man, we should be apt to think that God is not in earnest in this ; or, that it is no true revelation. If there be a word of peace from the higher government to our souls, there would be also, we should suppose, a permanent embassy of peace established in the foreign government of an alienated world. God could have converted the world by the preaching of Christ ; he could have regenerated it by a pure act of power ; but why is it that twenty centuries have passed, and but a fraction of the earth is Christian ? Is it not because God sees fit to commit this work to men—to involve human effort, trial, sympathy, responsibility, in this circle of human redemption ?

We clearly recognize the fact that all Christians are involved in this circle of responsibility to win souls to the subjection of the kingdom of God, and we claim for the ministry no exclusive right to teach or to work. We do not forget for a moment that there is no essential distinction between the people and the preacher in point of responsibility. The preacher is but one of the people, as a captain is but one of an army, whom the army has chosen out of its own body to perform a certain duty. All who love Christ are called to the work of making him known ; and this universal duty of all Christians is now better understood ; or, rather, the Church is returning to this primitive idea of Christianity. God speed the progress of this idea, until all the energy and working talent of the Church, of whatever kind, shall be developed. We are no sticklers for ministerial prerogative in doing good. The minister has no monopoly in preaching, or praying, or working. The church of God is the people



of God, and not the ministry. Still, there is a ministry of the gospel, and it has a great work to do, which other men in their worldly occupations and business cannot do so well. It is the entire consecration of some to the highest good of others and of all.

Augustine says that this ministry was not given to angels, because then "human nature would have been degraded. It would have been degraded had it seemed as if God would not communicate his word by man to man. The love which binds mankind in the bond of unity would have no means of fusing dispositions, so to speak, together, and placing them in communion with each other, if men were not to be taught by men."

Yet Augustine himself had so profound a conception of the greatness and responsibility of this work that when the eyes of the Christian world were fastened on him, he would go to no assembly or council which could ordain him a minister; and at last, when almost by accident he was chosen to a small spiritual charge, he received it with expressions of great affliction, so that his opposers said he was troubled because so small a place had been given him.<sup>1</sup> In like manner Chrysostom, at the age of twenty-six, could not possibly be persuaded to take up the public service of the ministry, because he felt his unfitness for it.<sup>2</sup>

God, in other things also, works by secondary agencies—himself the originating power of all things, and yet the only invisible One. He loves to hide himself in his instrumentalities and to manifest himself through them. He who made the light before he collected it into the sun, and hung that in the heavens to be the steady reser-

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<sup>1</sup> "Aug. Confessions," B. XI. See also Epist. XXI., ad Valerium.

<sup>2</sup> "Neander's Chrysostom," Eng. ed. p. 22.

voir and distributer of the light, seems to prefer, for his own wise ends, this instrumental method of working ; and we should therefore expect, in the revelation of a new Faith from the skies, the simultaneous ordaining of special agencies to make known this new message of truth and life.

We actually do find in the Scriptures of God's revealed will, this work of making known his word committed to the human instrument. As Christ gave the bread to his disciples to be distributed to the famishing multitudes, so God distributes the bread of life to men through the hands of his believing children and ministers ; they are not priests, but *ministers* ; they are not mediators, but simply servants.

*Start* Acts 20 : 28. " Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God." 2 Cor. 5 : 18. " And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Col. 4 : 17. " And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Tit. 1 : 3. " But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Saviour." The Gospel is a word, even as Christ is the Word. He was the perfect expression of God's nature. In his preaching, character, life, and death, he spoke the word of God ; and he commissions his preachers to continue to speak this word. One of the most extraordinary passages in the Bible, fitted to fill every Christian preacher's mind with awe, is that contained in 2 Cor. 5 : 20, " Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to

God." True preachers (and of these we speak) are here made to stand *in loco Christi*; they not only testify of Christ, but they represent him; they continue his work in his spirit and power; they are clothed in his representative authority. As ministers of Christ they exhibit both the love of God and the love of man. In the gospel which they announce, setting forth the way of union by faith, and bringing God into sinful humanity, they sustain and carry on the blessed "ministry of reconciliation." And so long as they truly love God and man, God speaks purely and powerfully through them to men; they persuade men to love God, even as they love him; they give God's invitations from hearts stirred by his love; they hold forth the means of a divine life; they stand half in the light of heaven and half of earth; they are, not physically nor officially, but morally, instruments of converting men to God; they do not effect conversion, but they are the means of its production; they use the truth to produce it, taking the Bible out of the dead letter, and making it a living word.

While they thus speak his word, and manifest his spirit and his love, they are the living ambassadors of God as truly as were Elijah and Elisha, Paul and John; and no man may despise them, for they speak with a divine authority—they speak the word of God to man. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." God said to an ancient preacher, "Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces." This sense of his divine commission is indeed the preacher's strength. He centres himself in God. He speaks out of the consciousness of God's choice of him, and of God's will expressed through

him ; and here is the source of his eloquence. The moment he loses this divine presence, and is conscious that he is delivering his own message, that he is speaking a human word, he becomes an ordinary man, an "earthen vessel" indeed.

This whole subject of the divine appointment of the ministry will be treated more thoroughly when we come to speak of the Pastoral Office ; but it is a good opportunity here, though not rightly belonging to the introduction, to say a single word on this mooted point of the preacher's *authority*, as one who speaks the word of God. As a practical matter, young preachers find this trouble—that they have the feeling often that many in their audience do not receive the Bible with the reverent faith that they do themselves ; and they think, therefore, that they cannot, like the lawyer at the bar, point them to the word of God as final authority, saying, "This is the law on the subject, this is the statute, this settles the question." In answer to this we would say that the preacher has a right, or, to put it stronger, is compelled to take for granted two things. First, that the Bible is the word of God, and therefore is final in its authority. This he must do to have a right to preach at all ; here is his own commission. Christianity is, above all, a word, the word of God. He should preach as if he believed this ; and here he finds his authority for what he says, and here is his standing-point to heave the minds of men from their deep-rooted sinfulness and sensuality. And he has to assume, secondly, that the audience before him do also believe that the Bible is the word of God, and that they may be spoken and appealed to as those who believe this. If the audience is composed of professed believers, as at the communion-table, the difficulty vanishes. If the audience is a common mixed one, com-



posed of believers and unbelievers, still the unbelieving portion put themselves in the position of believers by coming to the house of God to hear the gospel preached. They know that it is the house of God, where the Bible is preached as the word of God. There are, in any case, few in our congregations on the Lord's day who do not yield an outward respect to the Bible as the revealed word of God. Even a sceptical writer like Strauss concedes the historical value of a great portion of the Bible, and the value also of the religion which Christ, who he believed actually did live, taught. At all events there will not, probably, be one in the audience who does not believe in a God ; and if one does believe in a God, he must also believe that God has created him and cares for him, and that he has somewhere or somehow expressed this care and love for him. The preacher then has a right to assume that the Bible *is* that good word and message of God to man ; for if it is not, where can such a word be found ?

The apostles, when they preached to pure heathens and infidels, planted themselves on the simple word of God, and they appealed to the primary laws of God written in the conscience to confirm what they spoke. It was "by manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God," that they preached. The authority of the word of God was final with the apostles, while at the same time they cast themselves upon men's reason and consciousness to confirm the word preached. The apostles' preaching was thus both authoritative and persuasive. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul : " here, while a command is uttered, a reason is also given ; and a preacher may develop this reason to any extent, and show how inordinate appe-

tites injure the spiritual nature. Times, it is true, have changed, and the authority of the preacher has apparently diminished ; other influences have now come in to compete with the pulpit ; and the preacher's faith and patience are tried more than formerly to sustain his heaven-delegated authority ; but he should plant himself the more firmly on the word of God. He should awaken a deeper faith in his people in that word which " endureth forever," though the human preacher soon vanishes away. In the struggle between the authority of divine revelation and that of human consciousness, while Christianity admits both, and brings both to utter the same thing, it founds its final authority on the will of God ; and here the preacher should stand, where Luther stood, and where the apostles stood.

2. The greatness of the preacher's work is seen from the nature of the truths with which he deals. These truths may be generally summed up under the one name of *divinity*. " And what is divinity," says Robert South, " but a doctrine treating of the nature, attributes, and works of the great God, as he stands related to rational creatures, and the way how rational creatures may serve, worship, and enjoy him ? And if so, is not the subject of it the greatest, and the design and business of it the noblest, in the world, as being no less than to direct an immortal soul to its endless and eternal felicity ? It has been disputed to which of the intellectual habits mentioned by Aristotle it most properly belongs ; some referring it to wisdom, some to science, some to prudence, and some compounding it of several of them together ; but those seem to speak most to the purpose who will not have it formally, any one of them, but virtually, and in an eminent, transcendent manner, all. And now, can we think that a doctrine of that

depth, that height, and that vast compass, grasping within it all the perfections and dimensions of human science, does not worthily claim all the preparations whereby the wit and industry of man can fit him for it? All other sciences are but handmaids to divinity; and shall the handmaid be richer adorned and better clothed and set off than her mistress? In other things the art usually excels the matter, and the ornament we bestow is better than the subject we bestow it upon; but here we are sure that we have such a subject before us as not only calls for, but commands, and not only commands, but deserves our application to it; a subject of that native, that inherent worth, that it is not capable of any addition to it from us, but shines both through and above all the artificial lustre we can put upon it. The study of divinity is indeed difficult, and we are to labor hard and dig deep for it. But then we dig in a golden mine, which equally invites and rewards our labor.”<sup>1</sup> South says again, “For I reckon upon this as a great truth, that there can be no endowment in the soul of a man which God himself is the cause and giver of, but may, even in its highest and choicest operations, be sanctified and employed in the work of the ministry.”<sup>2</sup> But let us consider this more particularly. The high and difficult nature of the truths with which the preacher deals appears in the fact that they are (*a*) metaphysical truths. The preacher’s work is necessarily intellectual; he deals with men’s minds and rational nature; he must adapt the divine word to the human mind; he must know how to interpret it according to men’s intellectual nature. True preaching is addressed first to the intellect, for men must know the truth before they can be expected to obey or

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<sup>1</sup> “South’s Sermons,” Phil. ed., vol. ii. p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Id. p. 70.

love it. The intellect, conscience, affections, and will are so blended that they form one spiritual nature, and we cannot tell where are the lines of separation. The importance to the preacher of understanding the human mind is thus spoken of by Sir William Hamilton : " Theology is not independent of philosophy. For as God only exists for us as we have faculties capable of apprehending his existence, and of fulfilling his behests, nay, as the phenomena from which we are warranted to infer his being are wholly mental, the examination of these faculties and of these phenomena is consequently the primary condition of every sound theology." <sup>1</sup> This must be so. How can the preacher approach the mind God has made with the truth of which God is the author, if he has no clear conception of those mental laws which affect the reception of truth, which turn it to sweetness or bitterness, to life or death? How can he reach the conscience, the real man of the heart, if he does not comprehend the relations of conscience to the faculties of knowledge? How can he influence the judgment or sway the reason, if he is totally untaught, by either education or observation, in the great principles of causality? Or how can he move the affections, if he knows nothing of their proper place in the mind, and what and where are the true springs to touch? Besides, we cannot know God's mind if we do not understand our own. We reason from our own nature to God's nature. All reasoning upon strictly natural theology depends upon the clear apprehension of metaphysical axioms, and upon a sound philosophy. Everything, in fact, in the world of mind is subservient to the preacher's work. He works through ideas, reasons, motives, penetrating the depths of the

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<sup>1</sup> " Metaphysics," p. 44.



mind. The first preachers, if they were illiterate men at the beginning, became learned in the Scriptures, in the human heart, in the gift of tongues, and in the incomparable instructions and impartations of Christ and his spirit. Robert South has a characteristic passage which may apply here, in which he vents his scorn against unlearned persons who crept into the ministry during the commonwealth, some of them, without doubt, better men than himself. "Many rushed into the ministry as being the only calling they could profess without serving an apprenticeship. Had, indeed, the old Levitical hierarchy still continued, in which it was part of the ministerial office to flay the sacrifices, to cleanse the vessels, to scour the flesh-forks, to sweep the temple, and to carry the filth and rubbish to the brook Kidron, no persons living had been better fitted for the ministry, and to serve in this nature at the altar. But since *it is made a labor of the mind*, as to inform men's judgments and move their affections, to resolve difficult places of Scripture, to decide and clear off controversies, I cannot see how to be a butcher, scavenger, or any such trade, does at all qualify and prepare men for this work. We have had almost all sermons full of gibes and scoffs at human learning. Hereupon the ignorant have taken heart to venture upon this great calling, and instead of cutting their way to it according to the usual course, through the knowledge of the tongues, the study of philosophy, school divinity, the fathers and councils, they have taken another and shorter cut, and having read perhaps a treatise or two upon the Heart, the Bruised Reed, the Crumbs of Comfort, Wollebius in English, and some other little authors, they have set forth as accomplished divines, and forthwith they present themselves to the service ; and there have not been wanting Jeroboams as

willing to consecrate and receive them as they to offer themselves." South was not a believer in lay-preaching. Indeed, in view of the greatness of the work, much is to be said on both sides of that question, and there may be extreme views taken on either side which are injurious to the cause of truth and religion. While all Christians should "preach the gospel," and many an unordained preacher, like the great lay-preacher who suffered for his boldness twelve years in Bedford jail, may be a hundred fold more effective than one who is regularly appointed, yet even the lay-preacher should be fitted for the work both by human and divine preparation; he should not be a "novice;" he should be "apt to teach." The fitness for this work, in fact, lies more in quality than in quantity. But there are also (*b.*) moral truths with which the preacher has to deal. As our moral nature is deeper than our intellectual, so the preacher's work, which has to do chiefly with moral truth, is superior to all merely intellectual professions. The preacher is called upon to study those laws of God's government which underlie the whole system of truth; and his field is that vast moral system which God has opened to the human mind—that law which is "exceeding broad;" which is eternal because it is the manifestation of God's nature; which is perfect because it is the expression of his will; which is the law of the intelligent universe, one and simple in essence, but infinitely manifold in its applications.

To harmonize moral truth into a living whole is the preacher's work; for every man who deserves to be called "a preacher of righteousness" should, like Bunyan and Luther, have his own system of theology; that which he has himself drawn from the word, and which he preaches and lives. It is a want of reverence for moral truth not to strive, by one's own thought, in communion with the

divine mind, to discover the laws of order, arrangement, and beauty stamped upon it; and one cannot preach with the highest clearness and power who does not possess some well-ordered system of moral truth for his groundwork of reasoning and appeal. Moral truth has also an intimate and special relation to man's nature and duty. It enters the complex sphere of human life, and whatever bears directly or indirectly upon the common good of humanity belongs to the preacher's domain. He deals with the wonderful world of the human heart, its mixed good and evil, its affections that are so tender, its hate, passion, and crime, its joy and despair, its hopes and fears, its desires that are never satisfied but in God. Nothing is shut out from the preacher in mind, nature, morals, letters, art, science, government, the endless relations of society and human life, which influence moral character, and enter into the schooling of this lower life for a perfect life in God—in a word, that human theology concerning which Neander loved to quote the words, "*Pectus est quod facit theologum.*" But there is a still higher sphere of truth to which the preacher must ascend. He deals (*c.*) with spiritual truths. He must rise from the seen to the unseen, from the natural to the spiritual. In 1 Cor. 4:1 it is written, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." In Eph. 6:19 it is also written, "That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." In these passages, τὸ μυστήριον means literally a secret, a thing not obvious, not explained, or not explained to all, and perhaps impossible to be known by human reason; for there is a true as well as a false mysticism. Vinet says, "*Le bon mysticisme est la manne cachée des vérités évangéliques; il*

*fait sentir ce que ne peut pas se dire, ce que l'analyse est impuissant à expliquer."*<sup>1</sup>

In divine truth there is that which is obvious and that which is more spiritual and hidden, but of which much may be known by the spiritual mind. A telescope applied to the heavens brings to view objects which for thousands of years were not known to the simple, unaided human mind ; and Christian faith is, as it were, the application of a telescope to the spiritual firmament ; it reveals things "hidden from the foundation of the world." Christian faith is not a mere continuation or extension of natural religion, nor is it a system of religious truth which may be reached by, or is on a level with, our natural reason. It is above the level of natural religion. It is revealed by the Spirit. We could, of ourselves, never have arrived at the truth of Christ's redemptive work, although there is a profound preparation for it in man's history, and in the intimations and wants of his nature. Now, into this higher sphere of revealed truth, of those spiritual verities which comprehend the love and perfections of God and the truths of eternal life—the whole unseen world of faith—the preacher of Christ has to rise by the steps of faith, meditation, and prayer, so that he may become the interpreter of the hidden things of God ; for it is no easy or common thing to "rightly divide the word of truth ;" it shows that one has himself entered into it and apprehended it. It presupposes something more than scholarship, viz., spiritual insight, or the habit of communion with God and holy things. To be the guide of others in these regions of the higher truth, one must have had some true inward experience of the renewing power of truth ; as Tholuck

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<sup>1</sup> " Histoire de la Prédication des Réformés," etc., p. 624.



says, "Truth must have been revealed to him through the divine light of the cross shining upon his heart." Such preaching entering into hearts by "the power of the spirit of Christ," comes from a true knowledge of the saving and purifying power of the grace of Christ in the heart.

3. The greatness of the preacher's work appears from its results. These would be seen negatively were the pulpit stricken out of existence ; or by the comparison of Christian lands with heathen lands, or even with countries where the pulpit is chiefly an engine of hierarchical and political power. A superior condition of morality, education, and civilization is never found in lands where the Christian pulpit is not found ; and wherever, even, the pulpit has been shorn of its power, there is to be seen a corresponding moral deterioration among the people. Chalmers complained of the "dormancy of the Scottish popular mind," and we know the degraded character of the Scotch pulpit when he first entered public life ; and this same dulness and moral stupor were seen across the Tweed in the popular mind, when the English pulpit had in a great measure lost the power it possessed in the days of Howe, Owen, Baxter, Leighton. The quickening influence of the pulpit upon the American mind is too obvious to be denied. Daniel Webster said that he first learned how to reason from the preaching which he heard in his native village. Dr. Wood, the minister of Boscawen, fitted him for college ; and his tribute to the American ministry, in his argument on the Girard College case, is a proof of his intense convictions on this subject. The preacher goes deeper than the book in moulding the intellectual habits and tastes of his people ; for he begins earlier than the author, and exercises a more vital sway upon mind. Almost the only true elo-

quence that now reaches the popular mind in Germany is the eloquence of the pulpit ; and where are the men in any other profession who may be compared with those spiritual sovereigns in our own land, who, from their thrones, send forth a life-giving, shaping influence far around them ? Some of the views of such a theologian as Dr. Horace Bushnell may be considered to be open to attack ; but his stimulating power upon American thought will not soon pass away. All the colleges in the land, with one or two exceptions, owe their life principally to ministers ; and how many a young man, educated at college, and afterward distinguished for great intellectual attainments and wide influence among men, was sent from some obscure village through the agency of his minister, who had awaked in him the thirst for knowledge ! Many of our cities and towns were founded by ministers in the wilderness : New Haven by John Davenport ; Hartford by Thomas Hooker and Samuel Stone ; Providence by Roger Williams ; Salem by Francis Higginson ; Cambridge and Dorchester by John Warham ; and we need not repeat the well-proved fact, that our democratic institutions and republican form of government were modelled upon the practical working systems of that primitive New England church polity which was the fruit of the thought and wisdom of these minds. The intellectual, social, and moral influence of the preacher is too broad a theme to be entered upon in these introductory remarks ; and as Oberlin, in the barren Ban de la Roche, among the Vosges Mountains, elevated his parish in a physical and moral scale of being, and taught them how to make roads and raise crops, as well as to seek the kingdom of heaven, so every true minister raises the scale of being about him. He forms a central power in the moral world.

Sitting in his study, or standing in his pulpit, he wields a formative influence upon public opinion. He is the guardian of public virtue. He is the elect champion of the law of righteousness, as well as of the law of love. Wrong cannot withstand a free and faithful Christian pulpit. Every form of vice—intemperance, licentiousness, slander, covetousness, dishonesty, law-breaking—feels its restraining hand. The importance of the Christian pulpit is comprehensively shown in the fact that it so effectually resists the power of the kingdom of evil in the world ; that it sets itself in opposition to this great current ; that it so holds the passions of men in check ; that it speaks to men as with the voice of God, and bids them do what is right, and not do what is wrong. It not only resists but attacks evil. A true preacher is *aggressive*. He has taken up the battle for truth. He assails the power of evil wherever it shows itself, and seeks it out in its deepest hiding-places. In the reproof of sin he is terrible as Elijah and stern as Amos ; though he trusts more to the gentleness of Christ, and to “ the still small voice ” that finds its way to the heart.

Yet these results which have been glanced at are but the incidental and almost accidental side-issues and overflowings of the preacher’s work ; the direct fruits of his labors, under God, are inner and permanent, being wrought upon the soul itself. His work tells on character ; and, viewed in this relation, it is not to be estimated by gross standards ; we cannot weigh spiritual results ; faith, hope, joy, holiness, everlasting life, are incommensurable in quantity. To be a spiritual counselor and consoler, one to whom men turn instinctively in their sorrow for strength, for Christian consolation—what office so blessed ! To speak the word of sympathy to the soul, to be its guide through the darkness and

doubt of life, and to conduct it to the gates of everlasting life—what work is so great? He who can say of a single being, “whom I have begotten in the gospel,” has “saved a soul from death,” and has hid an innumerable and ever-increasing “multitude of sins.” One soul, that of a child, brought to the knowledge of the Saviour, and shielded from the evil of the world, is a result which would infinitely more than outweigh the toils and sufferings of a whole ministerial life. It is difficult to make a statement like this look natural and true, although so easy to make it; but if the apostle believed what he declared, that it is through the foolishness of preaching that men are saved, then such a statement is true. What words, truly, were those spoken by Christ to Paul at his conversion! “Rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

Does not Christ say these words to every true preacher now? and if not only the enlightening of one soul, but of hundreds of souls, may follow his labors, how can he sufficiently magnify the greatness of his work? While Luther was still a monk, he was urged to accept the office of “Preacher and Doctor of the Holy Scriptures;” he drew back with terror. “Seek one more worthy of it,” he said; but when the vicar-general pressed it, Luther, trembling, declared that “the Holy Spirit could alone make a Doctor of the Holy Scriptures;” and when



at last constrained to accept the charge, he took this simple oath : " I swear to defend manfully the truth of the gospel ;" as if this were all he could do, or dared to undertake, and that God must do the rest. The earnest, homely words of Philip Henry, on the day of his ordination, cannot be too often quoted to those entering the ministry : " I did this day receive so much honor and work as ever I shall know what to do with. Lord Jesus, proportion supplies accordingly."

4. The greatness and dignity of the preacher's work are seen from the fact that Jesus was a preacher. It seems strange that we do not, as a general thing, seem to think of the Saviour as a preacher, nor set his preaching before us as a model for our own ; for while there may be, it cannot be doubted, a profound truth in this negative sentiment of all reverent minds, arising from the fact that our Lord is above all human comparison, and also in the blended fact that our Lord furnished the material and was " the truth" that we, as preachers, are to use and proclaim, as in another's words : " Thus he spoke to them of the kingdom of heaven ; and when he wielded the powers of his kingdom, they felt more and more that he governed the secret heart of nature and of man ;" <sup>1</sup> yet, notwithstanding all this, if we take the Saviour's own testimony upon this point, he claimed to be a preacher, and made this a main part of his earthly work. We have but to recall the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, where he applied to himself Isaiah's words, " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me, to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind,

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<sup>1</sup> F. D. Maurice, *Theol. Essays*.

to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And it is said in Matt. 11 : 1, " And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence, to teach and preach in their cities." And in Mark 1 : 38, 39, " And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also : for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee." The power of Jesus' preaching may be estimated by its effects. Great multitudes followed him. He drew them after him in a triumphal train wherever he went. The Pharisees said, " If we let him alone, all the people will believe on him ;" and it was from his deadly enemies that the remarkable confession came, " O, sirs, never man spake as this man." The fears, hope, love, hate, of the multitudes who thronged him were touched. If eloquence consists in moving the soul, this was eloquence. He made men look into their hearts, and they rushed upon him to destroy him, or cast themselves at his feet to adore him. He swayed men at his will. He made men look to him for help. They brought their real wants, doubts, and sorrows to him. They asked him questions with that popular instinct which, in some sense, is the voice of God, because it is the voice of nature, perceiving in him a divine truth, seeing that he was a true teacher. And how many cases are mentioned in the Gospels of immediate conversion following his words ! The more remote results of Christ's preaching is a theme beyond the power of imagination to conceive ; for the few recorded discourses and words of Christ have formed the staple of divine truth and of all true preaching, ever since. It may be that the Occidental mind demands a treatment of truth different from what the Oriental requires, and that the ages differ ; but

truth is the same, and man's mind is the same now as then ; and the intrinsic qualities of our Lord's preaching may be studied, even if his preaching was that of Omniscience. The dignity and greatness of the preacher's work is, at all events, confirmed and crowned by the fact that Jesus was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor.





# PART FIRST.

## HOMILETICS PROPER.

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### INTRODUCTION.

#### SEC. I. *Literature of Homiletics and Rhetoric.*

The object of this section is not to give to the student a comprehensive view of the extensive literature of Homiletics, but only to present, in the briefest possible form for practical uses, the names of some valuable books which are most available to the theological student, and to the ordinary preacher and pastor while actively engaged in his work, by the faithful study of which he may be introduced and led on to a more thorough knowledge of the rich field of homiletical literature.

Among ancient classical authors upon rhetoric, there are four works that may be regarded as forming the head-sources of knowledge in this art, viewed simply as an art, unconnected with its specific use by preachers and other professional speakers and writers; these are Aristotle's "Treatise on Rhetoric" (*Τεχνῆς Ῥητορικῆς*), Cicero's "De Oratore," "Quintilian's Institutes" (*Institutiones*), Horace's "De Arte Poetica."

Ancient  
Works on  
Rhetoric.

The principles of eloquence, or the art of influencing men through public discourse, drawn from nature and illustrated by the best examples of oratory in the most intellectual nations of antiquity, are reduced by these writers for the first time, and one might say for all time, to something like a science. In them we find exemplified what a German writer calls, "*die wahre Norm der Attischen Beredsamkeit*," or that true law of eloquent and persuasive speech, which is similar in all ages and lands, since humanity everywhere is subject to the same intellectual laws, and swayed by the same moral forces.

Aristotle, highly condensed and obscurely elementary, plants the seeds which, in Quintilian, bear ripe and noble fruits. Quintilian has not been surpassed in ancient or modern times as a guide in oratory. In a word, it may be said that almost all that has been taught on the subject of public discourse since their day is but a reproduction or a development of what these old masters enunciated.

The eloquence of the Christian pulpit, however, presents a new field, which, though it draws from the common principles of logic and rhetoric, has laws of its own that are derived from higher sources than any human art.

Among the numerous works in the English language upon rhetoric and homiletics may be mentioned (for their practical qualities and uses) Campbell's **English Works on Rhetoric and Homiletics.** "Philosophy of Rhetoric" and Campbell's "Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence;" Whately's "Elements of Rhetoric;" De Quincey's "Essay on Style;" Herbert Spencer's "Essay on Style;" Porter's "Lectures on Homiletics and Preaching;" Ripley's "Sacred Rhetoric" (containing Henry Ware's "Hints on Extemporaneous Preaching"); Zincke's "Duty and Discipline of Extemporaneous Preach-

ing ;" J. W. Alexander's "Thoughts on Preaching ;" Moore's "Thoughts on Preaching ;" Kidder's "Treatise on Homiletics ;" Shedd's "Homiletics and Pastoral Theology ;" Day's "Rhetoric" and Day's "Art of Discourse ;" "Christian Rhetoric," by G. W. Hervey ;<sup>1</sup> "Principles of Rhetoric," by A. S. Hill.

An additional fruitful source of homiletical instruction is found in English sermon literature, especially the sermons of Wyclif, Hugh Latimer, John Howe, Robert South, Isaac Barrow, Jeremy Taylor, Archbishop Leighton, Archbishop Tillotson, John Bunyan, Richard Baxter, Bishop Butler, Philip Doddridge, Robert Hall, Thomas Chalmers, John Wesley, Henry Melville, J. H. Newman, F. W. Robertson, Thomas Binney, Canon Mozley, Canon Liddon, Jonathan Edwards, Dr. Dwight, Dr. Emmons, Dr. Channing, John M. Mason, Horace Bushnell, and Phillips Brooks.

Among French works are Vinet's "Homiletics, or the Theory of Preaching ;" Fénelon's "Dialogues on Eloquence ;" Claude's "Essay on the Composition of a Sermon ;" Abbé Maury's **French Works.** "Essai sur l'éloquence de la chaire ;" Athanase Coquerel's "Observations pratiques sur la Prédication ;" Monod "On the Delivery of a Sermon ;"

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<sup>1</sup> This author's design deserves special notice as following the lead of Rudolf Stier in his "Keryktik," and Sikel in his "Halieutik," to build up a system of sacred rhetoric entirely on the biblical side, disregarding to a great extent the rules of rhetoric, and seeking for power to work upon the souls of men exclusively in the divine oracles, and by studying the methods of the prophetic and apostolic preachers. It is an interesting work, perhaps too elaborate for practical use, but worthy of study. Its idea of "inspirational rhetoric" was a favorite one of Origen, and other great preachers of past ages, who did not, however, call it (as this author does) by the name of "sub-inspiration," but claimed for it an essentially prophetic character.

Bautain's "Art of Extempore Speaking." Of the host of illustrious French pulpit orators we would mention only the names of Bossuet, Massillon, Fénelon, Bourdaloue, Claude, Saurin, Alexandre Vinet, Lacordaire, Athanase Coquerel, the brothers Monod, and De Presensé.

Among the more common and well-known German works, are Ammon's "Handbuch der Einleitung zur Kanzelberedsamkeit;" Palmer's "Evangelische Homiletik;" Reinhard's "Briefe;" Schott's "Theorie der Beredsamkeit;" Marheinecke's "Grundlage der Homiletik;" Henke's "Nachgelassenen Vorlesungen über Liturgik und Homiletik;" Hagenbach's "Liturgik und Homiletik;" Rudolf Stier's "Grundriss einer Biblischen Keryktik;" Klein's "Die Beredsamkeit des Geistlichen;" Theremin's "Die Beredsamkeit eine Tugend."

Of German sermons, among those specially valuable to the student and preacher may be named the sermons of Tauler, Luther, Zwingli, Mosheim, Zollikoffer, Reinhard, Schleiermacher, Nitzsch, Jul. Müller, and Tholuck.

To the above brief list might be added such works as Vinet's "Histoire de la Prédication de l'Eglise Reformée de France, pendant la siècle dix-septième;" Paniel's "Pragmatische Geschichte der Christlichen Beredsamkeit;" Ludwig Stiebetz' "Zur Geschichte der Predigt in der Evangelischen Kirche von Mosheim bis auf die Gegenwart;" Lentz' "Geschichte der Christlichen Homiletik;" Neander's "Life of Chrysostom;" Moule's "Christian Oratory during the First Five Centuries;" Neale's "Mediæval Preachers and Preaching."

Works like these, giving a penetrative and empirical view of preaching, enable us to compare the great



preachers of the different historic periods of the Christian Church, and to note the similarity in diversity, or the common qualities which belonged to them all, and which constitute their main sources of power and success.

The judicious study, also, of the preachers of the ancient Greek and Latin churches is to be commended, as forming a most valuable and, in our country, a comparatively fresh field of sacred eloquence, as well as of theological learning.

**Patristic  
Literature.**

Augustine, in his treatise "*De Doctrinâ Christianâ*," devotes a chapter to sacred rhetoric which is of priceless worth. The discourses of Augustine and Chrysostom are, incomparably, the most important, homiletically considered, of all patristic sermons and writings; and when it is considered that some five hundred and ninety sermons of Augustine are extant, and that through their ancient Latin garb the fire and living soul of the true preacher of Christ glow, this department of sermon literature is by no means to be overlooked. It is a garden rank indeed with luxuriant vegetation and useless weeds, but this fact shows the depth of the original soil and its proximity to the primitive springs of spiritual life and growth.

To this list the best modern works upon the study of the English language, such as those of Trench, Alford, Max Müller, Marsh, Craik, and Whitney, might be added; and, in fact, all English literature of a genuine kind, which embodies the moral power and vital qualities of the English tongue, is an indirect but important auxiliary to homiletical studies.

**Works on  
the English  
Language.**

In the most comprehensive treatises upon Pastoral Theology, from Chrysostom's "*Treatise on the*

Priesthood" down to the latest modern works like Van Oosterzee's "Practical Theology" and Otto's "Evangelische Practische Theologie," there are elaborate discussions upon the subject of preaching, because this subject is identical with a minister's entire work and influence.

It need hardly be suggested that the study of the Scriptures—of the prophetic writings, which were originally bold popular addresses; above all of our Lord's own discourses; of the apostle Paul's orations and his epistles, which are evidently in the style and manner of his accustomed earnest speech to the people—that this study is fundamental in a homiletic point of view. Throughout the Pauline epistles there are scattered special instructions to preachers which, taken together, form a complete system of Pauline homiletics, being in fact the first work, and that an inspired one, upon this great theme.

## SEC. 2. *Definition of Homiletical Terms.*

Before treating the practical subject of Homiletics, it will be necessary to define some of the more familiar terms that are in constant use in this science.

1. Homily.—This word has a clearly scriptural origin. It is true that "homily" was not at first, in the New Testament or in immediately post-scriptural times, identical with our modern term "sermon." It was more nearly assimilated to the primitive meaning of "discourse," or "conversation." It implied literally "question and answer," and thus the familiar address or discussion of truth in an informal conversational way. It is derived from ὄμιλος, meaning a crowd, whence ὁμιλεω, "to be in company with," "to

have intercourse or communion with," as in Luke 24 : 14, 15, and Acts 20 : 11, and in 1 Cor. 15 : 33, signifying "converse," "asking and answering questions," whence the interlocutory address, or the conversational style of address upon the facts of Christ's life and religion among Gentiles and Jews, and especially in the primitive Christian assemblies.

Originally it was doubtless a literal answer to a literal question. The "homily" which afterward came to be the Greek term in the Eastern Church for public address, or preaching upon religious themes, and which long continued to be the form of preaching both in the Eastern and Western Churches, was, subsequent to the apostolic age, a simple exposition or continuous explanation of the passage of Scripture read in the sacred assembly. It consisted almost entirely of explanation, and had little of the character of a formal oration. Thus we see that "homily," having a scriptural origin, grew to be the term, and more than that, with some considerable modification, the idea of the "sermon," as we use it. But still it is well to bear in mind (and this is an important fact which looks toward the biblical intention, simplification, and rectification of preaching) that the "homily," as originally found and employed in the early times of the Church, differs in some marked respects from the modern "sermon." Vinet says :

"If the homily is not as greatly different from the ordinary sermon as we commonly suppose, it has yet a character of its own. This character belongs to it not only from its having to do most frequently with recitals, or from any familiarity peculiar to this kind of discourse, but rather from this, that its chief business, its principal object, is to set in relief the successive parts of an extended text, subordinating them to its contour, its acci-

dents, its chances, if we may so speak, more than can be done in the sermon, properly so called.

"Nothing distinguishes, essentially, the homily from the sermon, except the comparative predominance of analysis, in other terms, the prevalence of explanation over system."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the "homily" is the simpler, older, and more scriptural method of preaching, or of the continuous exposition of the truths and facts of the gospel, springing up at first in a most natural way in the congregations of Christian believers, and then developing into something of a systematic nature.

In order to make this description of the "homily" complete, it would be necessary to add that, ecclesiastically, the "homily" came to be regarded as a peculiar form of "sermon," chiefly expository, being an explanation of shorter or longer passages of Scripture prepared to be read in the public assemblies for worship.

The earliest "homilies" known are those of Origen, and the "Clementine Homilies," the last being of later date. The "homilies" of Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Augustine, Athanasius, Gregory the Great, and other fathers, are strictly expositions of Scripture, and sometimes are of great value.

In mediæval ages, "Homilaria," or books of homilies, were widely circulated among the clergy. The "Homilaria" of Paulus Diaconus is well known. The "Festivale" or "Liber Festivalis," was also such a collection, and was printed by Caxton in 1482. The "Homilies" issued in the reigns of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth, and afterward those published from time to time by the authority of the Established Church of England, are

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<sup>1</sup> "Homiletics" (Am. ed., Skinner's trans.), p. 148.



familiar examples. But it is to be observed that even in this strictly ecclesiastical and technical use of the word, the idea is chiefly that of exposition, the homily being, in fact, a brief expository sermon.

2. Homiletics.—This word, derived from “homily,” but taking a broader meaning, as comprehending in one term the whole subject and science of preaching, or of formal public address in the **Homiletics.** pulpit of an organized Christian Church, may be thus defined: Homiletics is the science that teaches the fundamental principles of public discourse as applied to the proclamation and teaching of divine truth in regular assemblies gathered for the purpose of Christian worship.

It does not concern private, but it does apply to public discourse, for the purpose of instruction, renewal, and edification in divine truth. It does not have reference to a discourse of an informal and accidental character, but it is that which is connected with the regular worship of God in the stated assemblies of the Christian Church.

3. Preaching.—This also is a scriptural term, and its true meaning must therefore be sought for chiefly in the Bible. Although *κηρύσσω*, or *κήρυγμα*, is the word commonly employed for “preaching.” **Preaching.** in the New Testament, there are other words which are used for the same general purpose, such as *εὐαγγελίζω*, *καταγγέλλω*, *διαλέγομαι*, *λαλέω*.

The uses and meanings of these different terms, so nearly identical, and which, in comparatively few cases, together and severally, might be made to signify what we now generally mean by the term “preaching,” have been thus comprehensively summed up:

*Λαλέω* probably meant no more than colloquial or household instruction, as in Mark 2:2.

*Διαλέγομαι*, as the word imports, may have been open

discussions with opponents, or a kind of dialectic discourse after the Socratic manner ; though in Acts 20 : 7 we have the word applied to what would seem to have been an approximation to our modern sermon.

The two words rendered "to preach," which are found most frequently, are *εὐαγγελίζω* and *κηρύσσω*. "Each of these, in various forms, occurs upward of fifty times, and must be allowed to describe a teaching which should be both public in its character and duly authorized (*κήρυξις*) in the manner of proclaiming it."<sup>1</sup>

While this last remark is true, that the *κήρυξις* was commonly an authorized, or well-recognized "herald," yet the term "preaching" is evidently used in the New Testament in the most general sense, as signifying a heralding in every manner and mode of the word of God to man, to one man as well as to the people.

Preaching thus is not necessarily a popular address, or a regular discourse in a regular assembly, but may be applied to all kinds of "proclaiming" or "publishing" of Christian truth in whatever way, in private conversation, in the interviews of missionaries with the heathen, in the addresses of evangelists, in the common intercourse of men, in the daily life and example of believers—in fact, it is making known in any and every effectual way, by one's conduct, precept, or personality, the message of God to men.

Thus our Saviour preached not only in the synagogue but by the wayside, in the conversation by the well, on the mountain and in the household, at the table, upon the walk through the fields, by word, look, action, and life. "Preaching" is thus a more comprehensive term than "homily" or "sermon."

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<sup>1</sup> Moore's "Thoughts on Preaching," p. 6.

4. Sermon.—The Latin word “*sermo*,” signifying “discourse,” “discoursing or talking” with one, and which also originally implied question and answer, and the fact of an audience whose questions are real or implied, is, indeed, as near an equivalent to the biblical Greek word ὁμιλία, or “homily,” as could well be found ; but, as has been seen, it somewhat differs from it. It does, in fact, by common usage, mean a more finished address, a more formal treatment of a passage of Scripture, or theme suggested by such a passage, than does “homily,” and certainly than does “preaching.” It implies not only analysis but synthesis ; and it presupposes a set discourse, or sacred oration, complete in its parts, delivered to an assembly of Christian people brought together for the purpose of public worship. It is a deliberate address to a religious assembly. It is the familiar “homily” become or grown up into a regular discourse with plan and method ; and it may be considered to be in some measure, in these later days, falsely formalized and stratified into the rigid shape of an oration artistically viewed.

#### Sermon.

But this stratifying process was early begun. One of the Latin fathers writes :

“*Theologi Christiani, et nominative ex veteribus Chrysostomus, Basilius, Macarius, et alii, ὁμιλίᾳς vocant sermones ad coctum habitos. Atque ita ὁμιλία et λόγος differunt.*”

The “sermon,” however, whether it be scriptural or unscriptural, true or false, in its form, combines the simple idea of “preaching,” or publishing the word of God, or the more familiar idea of explanatory address, with the idea of a thoughtful, even philosophical and methodized style of discourse adapted to instruct the people in divine truth.

Vinet’s definition of the “sermon” is excellent ; and

we could adopt it as, on the whole, the best we have seen :  
“ The sermon is a discourse incorporated with public worship, and designed, concurrently or alternately, to conduct to Christian truth one who has not yet believed it, or to explain and apply it to those who admit it.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “ Homiletics,” p. 28.



## FIRST DIVISION.

### HISTORY OF PREACHING.

#### SEC. 3. *Introduction.*

Inasmuch as the spiritual nature of man is the highest measure of his moral and intellectual, and, we might even say, his physical being, there can be imagined no standard which marks so delicately and truly as preaching does the character of a period, since preaching, in all cases where it is genuine, is one of the most appreciable expressions of the purely spiritual in man.

Preaching an  
expression of  
the spirit of  
an age.

Study the sermons of a period and you will reach, as nearly as can be done, the height and depth of the spirit of that period. The preacher can rarely go far in advance of or remain far behind the intellectual and moral appreciation of the people to whom he preaches; and while therefore the fundamental truths or principles of preaching remain the same, the style of preaching, both in its spirit and form, becomes a sure though ever-changing index of the varied phases of the religious life of great Christian epochs. Have we not, then, in this a kind of guiding law, or principle, in the investigation of the history of preaching; and have we not also some reason to believe that preaching in all its varying styles and methods has been providentially guided by the Spirit of God, so that it

shall be a powerful influence in the world, and a fit instrument of divine wisdom for the highest welfare and advancement of every age of the Church ?

In the history of preaching there are thus, as in religion itself, the permanent and variable elements. While the underlying subject of preaching is the same, the forms in which truth is appreciated, and its modes of influencing the popular mind, are constantly undergoing development ; and he surely is the preacher best fitted to influence the age in which he lives, who, while sincerely loyal to the truth, is still intelligently alive to the influences of the time of which he forms a part ; and as a necessary corollary to this, the preacher's own responsibility to his age is great. He should not only be one keenly susceptible to the outward influences of his times, but a higher responsibility still is laid upon him to exert his best powers to go beneath the surface of things, to study the hidden tendencies of thought and opinion, to discover those deeper causes that are ever at work in the spiritual world. He should strive to come at the elemental forces which originate and control the philosophy as well as history of his age. This present age, whose questions go under the form to the substance of truth, is an age in which the laity are well educated and have independent opinions, and are not disposed to take their creeds second hand. This shows that the time is one transitional to something higher and better. It is difficult but still it is good to live, and be a preacher of Christ, in such a time. Robert Hall said, " As the Christian ministry is established for the instruction of men, throughout every age, in truth and holiness, it must adapt itself to the ever-shifting scenes of the moral world, and stand ready

to repel the attacks of error, under whatever form it may appear." We are not called upon as preachers to fight bodiless ghosts that have been long laid to rest, but living forms and powers of unbelief. We should understand fairly what these are. There are problems that trouble this age. There are questions in regard to the adjustment of philosophy and inspiration, science and religion. There is a strong and unreconciled strife between the facts of human consciousness and those of supernaturally revealed religion. In this thinking age, can the preacher, on any reasonable grounds, hope to maintain his influence, who rests back on antedated or really unlearned and superficial systems of interpretation, who does not appreciate the deeper spirit of critical research that prevails, who is unsympathetic with the scientific thought of his times, or who, intellectually, lags behind?

The gospel must be applied to the mental condition and actual wants of men. So far as the mere form of preaching is concerned, he who would now preach to the people in the childishly allegorical style of the Middle Ages, or the superlatively theological method of the later scholastic period, or even the quaintly rigid manner of our Puritan fathers, with their innumerable topics and endless elaboration of method, would be regarded as an obsolete anomaly; and although it is easy to pass beyond the truth here, and to lay down a wrong principle from over-statement, yet we might apply the remark to the age of the reformers, so full of rude polemic theology as well as of the energy of faith; we might even extend it to the apostolical age, for Christ may be preached under varying forms, and with new styles of argumentation and new clothing of words and illustration, and it would be Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

The preaching also of every man differs, or should do so, from that of every other man. He speaks out of his personal knowledge of Christ, or he will not greatly influence men and his times. God tells a man to preach the gospel according to the conception of his own soul—as Christ is to him and has been to him in the truest experiences of life, and through the channels of his own nature and power of expression. One man will address with more force the intellectual side, the other the emotional. John did not preach like James, nor Chrysostom like Augustine, nor Luther like Melancthon. Each knew something of the love of Christ, and each had obtained some partial though true view of the whole system of truth. The personality of the preacher, if he is a genuine man, is transfused by the divine spirit of the word which he preaches, but not destroyed. Every true man speaks as he is taught, not of men, but of Christ.

While this truth of the importance of the principle of adaptation is to be duly considered, it should not be pressed beyond its real value. The preacher may easily overestimate it, and become subservient to the phenomenal and regardless of the essential. He thus tends to the sensational and superficial. He may seek only to interest rather than rectify and save. The permanent element in preaching which is founded upon the absolute laws of being and the moral constitution of the universe, is, after all, its great power. This is not to be lost sight of, like the everlasting stars to the mariner. The relations of the moral being of man to the government of God and the intimate revelation of the divine nature in the work and spirit of Christ, the principles of righteousness and love which come from these, form the groundwork of all true



preaching in every age. They lend strength, authority, and assured success to the message of God to humanity through the voice of the living preacher. They speak to the nature of every man, whatever his position or education. As a being who has a conscience, and who is made for better things than the pursuit of selfish happiness, who is capable of sin and at the same time capable of holiness, who is created for all that is implied in the name of God—he will and must respond to the laws of moral being in whose environment he is irresistibly established. The preacher should partake in some measure of the unchangeable character of those divine principles upon which the kingdom of God itself is founded. Then he becomes a truly apostolic preacher.

When we thus study the permanent and the changeable elements in preaching, its philosophy, and its practical adaptation to the wants of humanity, we find that the history of preaching, becomes a most valuable study in its living lessons to the preacher in his own great art ; revealing to him, if he reads it aright, the secret of divine influence upon mind, and of the application of human thought and skill directed by the Spirit of God.

But we see also that to carry out the perfect plan of a history of preaching would require an immense sweep of philosophical investigation. It would demand an examination of the religious thought and life of different periods of the Church ; of the progress and development of religious opinion, and the genesis of creeds ; of the history of popular morals and manners ; of the systems of philosophy that have been dominant or current in various epochs ; of the contemporary secular events that have had their influence upon preaching, such as the changes of government, the characteris-

What  
required  
for a  
history of  
preaching.

tic phenomena of national mind, popular education, law, and civilization ; and, above all, of the homiletical works and the particular training, under the providence of God, of great representative preachers, since every man has been shaped for his work by that Spirit who chooses his instruments with consummate skill.<sup>1</sup>

The history of preaching forms, in fact, an essential part of the history of the Christian Church—for preaching began with the earliest beginnings of Christianity, and was one of the main instrumentalities of its growth ; and it has never ceased to exert a shaping influence upon Christian life. We have but to think each for himself of his own religious experience, in order to recognize the vast power over his own spiritual life, which has been exercised by the minds of preachers with whom he has come in contact. They have from our infancy moulded our inner nature as by powerful hands into the forms they wear, so that it is difficult for us ever to get away from the influence of these teachers.

Viewing church history in a homiletical light, of the earliest ages after the apostolic age, *the fourth and fifth centuries* form the richest epoch in the works and lives of great preachers of the Christian Church ; while the first three centuries succeeding the times of the apostles are more barren in the materials of illustration. The mediæval period, when sacerdotalism almost killed out the life of preaching, though extremely interesting in some respects, is greatly wanting in the substance and spirit of evangelical preaching. It has been said that for a thousand years, from Augustine to Wyclif, the eloquence of the pulpit

**The richest  
and the  
most barren  
ages in  
history of  
preaching.**

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Prag. Gesch.," p. 4.

waned. Though this is too sweeping a statement, yet with some modifications and notable exceptions it is lamentably true ; and not until the period of the Reformation, and immediately succeeding it, did there appear again great, original, apostolic preachers. With the aids of ecclesiastical history, of references to the writings and sermons of eminent preachers, and of the works of approved writers upon Christian eloquence, we shall endeavor to give a rapid survey of the history of preaching from the earliest beginnings to the present time, sketching some of the principal preachers in the light of models more or less to be imitated, and endeavoring to arrive at their sources of power as instruments in the hand of God of interpreting his truth, and of guiding souls into the kingdom of his Son.<sup>1</sup>

#### SEC. 4. *Pre-apostolic Preaching.*

From the beginning of the race, notwithstanding its decadence from perfect holiness, there has ever been a communication maintained between the Creator and his creatures. His Spirit has always spoken to men and striven with them. He has never left himself without a witness of his truth. There has been a revelation of the divine will both to the consciousness and the reason of men, that has been interpreted, conveyed, and enforced principally through an intelligent and independent though supernaturally guided human agency. The interpreters of

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<sup>1</sup> The author would acknowledge his obligations especially to Paniel's *Geschichte der Christlichen Beredsamkeit* for assistance derived in the history of the five first centuries of Christian preaching. He has not only followed the general order of this author in discussing topics, but also sometimes quoted his words. This, whenever done, has been noted.

the will and word of God, sometimes interpreting more darkly and sometimes more clearly, we may freely call "preachers," for they heralded God's truth to men. Righteous Noah, early in the life of humanity, but after the world had lapsed from the knowledge of God, is thus called (2 Peter 2 : 5) *δικαιοσύνης κήρυκας*, "a preacher of righteousness." He proclaimed the righteous will of God to an evil generation. Moses, who could lead an exodus, and free men from the yoke of political servitude, who was essentially a statesman and organizer, felt himself, on the other hand, unequal to the task of teaching divine truth by public address, being "slow of speech and slow of tongue," and transferred that office to Aaron.

In Jehoshaphat's time we read (2 Chron. 17 : 9) of those "who taught in Judah, and had the book of the law with them, and went throughout the cities of Judah and taught the people."

The "prophets" of the Old Testament are, above all, noticeable in this regard ; who resembled, far more than the "priests" of that dispensation, the preachers of the Christian Church ; they were the real teachers of the people in the ways of God.

"Schools of the prophets" were established very early in the history of the Jewish nation. In these were gathered young men, who were instructed for the office which they were afterward to fill, so that from the time of the prophet Samuel to the closing of the canon of the Old Testament there seems never to have been wanting men for the prophetic office. Their chief study was the divine law and its interpretation, the oral as distinct from the ceremonial law.



The functions of the prophet, as thus trained in these schools, were more specifically :

1. Moral instruction, especially that of messengers sent directly from God to men with messages of righteousness.

2. The recording of inspiration, or of what God taught them for the benefit of the people ; and we are chiefly indebted to them for the word of God comprised in the Old Testament Scriptures.

3. Sacred music and poetry, which were made the vehicle of inspiration for the instruction of the people.<sup>1</sup>

These schools were at Gibeah and Ramah ; at Gilgal, under Elisha ; and at Bethel, Jericho, and Mount Ephraim. The number of students in these institutions are spoken of in 2 Kings 4 : 43 and 2 Kings 2 : 16. Their method of support, poverty, and self-denial are described in 2 Kings 6 : 1-7 ; 2 Kings 4 : 38-44.

These institutions had no invested funds, nor permanent sources of supply, but the scholars depended on temporary aid and even upon miracles for their maintenance. Their instruction in music and the spirit of prophecy, and the relations of music to prophesying, are delineated in 1 Sam. 10 : 5, 6 ; 19 : 18-24 ; 1 Chron. 25 : 1, 3, 6 ; 13 : 8 ; 2 Sam. 6 : 5.

Their culture, to enable them to become the annalists of the religious history of the nation, and the recorders of revelation, was an important though subsidiary qualification to the prophetic gift.

The most ancient meaning of the Hebrew word " prophet," in its earliest use in the Bible, is not so much " foreteller" as " spokesman," **Meaning of** or " interpreter." The Hebrew verb נָבֵא, **" prophet."** " to prophecy," means literally " to bubble up like a spring."

<sup>1</sup> See Cowles's " Hebrew History," p. 111, *seq.*

The prophet was a God-filled man, pouring irrepressibly forth the declarations of God.

*Προφήτης* in classical Greek is "one who speaks for another," especially one who speaks under supernatural influence, and so interprets the will of his God.

In the true prophet God speaks directly, disregarding regular forms and channels. In him the moral, the spiritual, the divine, prevailed over the ritual element. He interpreted the divine law. Being filled by its potency, he was forced to utter its commands. He is called, in so many words, a "preacher;" thus the denunciation of Jonah against Nineveh is spoken of in Matt. 12:41 as *τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωνᾶ*—the preaching of Jonah.

When the priesthood degenerated, the prophet appeared in order to teach men; and the prophetic order of teachers was as truly recognized and established as the priestly order.

The prophets sprang, as a common rule, from the people, but they belonged to no class or caste, and princes and nobles as well as shepherds and tillers of the ground sometimes appeared in the line of the prophets.

The prophet represented the universal soul of humanity that responded to the law of God written in the conscience, not regarding the political, social, and ecclesiastical differences that separate men. They told the people their sins without fear or favor—as God's spokesmen, responsible to him alone. They sternly rebuked wicked men. They taught the truth, or the true faith, though morally and spiritually rather than dogmatically, and often with mighty eloquence, as with lips touched by a coal of fire from off God's altar. Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, have never been surpassed in boldness, sublimity, and force, by uninspired men. They taught commonly by

the method of direct oral address, and were looked upon as authorized by God to speak to the people.

Thus, at the very end of the old dispensation, John the Baptist was recognized as a prophetic teacher sent from God.

Jesus himself, as "the Anointed," or the One "sent" from God, came in the regular line of the prophets, and was so accepted by minds susceptible to righteousness; and, in like manner, all true Christian preachers, through Christ, are, in some sense, in the line of the "prophets," or are "prophets;" and if they be genuinely holy men, God speaks through them as proclaimers of his law and preachers of righteousness, interpreting, like the older prophets, the letter by the spirit. But Christian preachers should take heed also to the warning in the New Testament, that if they prophesy, "let them prophesy according to the proportion of faith." This is a most interesting point of resemblance, and later on we shall speak more fully of this relation.

After the Captivity there was renewed enthusiasm for the teaching of the law, and schools were established to raise up skilful interpreters of the Hebrew moral code, who were afterward the "lawyers" mentioned in the New Testament.

Synagogues also were founded, in which were regular expositions of the "law and the prophets" on the Sabbath; and in the time of the introduction of Christianity, according to Philo, the services of the large and splendidly adorned Jewish synagogues consisted chiefly of oral instruction and free, extended speaking.

Notwithstanding, however, all that has been affirmed concerning the prophetic office in the Old Testament, it must be said that "preaching," in the New Testament sense of the term, was not the main or even prominent

instrumentality of spreading divine truth and building up the kingdom of God in the former dispensation ; yet

**Preaching  
not the  
main instru-  
mentality  
of Old  
Dispensation.**

we ought not to consider preaching to be so peculiar to the Christian economy that there are to be found no suggestions or even true examples of it in the older church ; for it belongs rather to the needs of our common human nature, to the divine method of reason and love, to the character of a reasonable religion, and to the most efficient mode of communicating spiritual truth to men. That preaching is not wholly confined to the biblical dispensation and appointment, whether of the Old or New Dispensation, but is a natural method of communicating truth, is illustrated, for instance, by the example of the Greek philosophers.

Like the older philosophers, Thales, Pythagoras, and  
**Socrates.** Anaxagoras, who preceded him, Socrates

might be mentioned as an eminent example of the power of oral instruction. His teaching, which has had so wonderful and indestructible an influence upon human thought, was wholly oral. He seems to have written nothing. When asked why he did not write out his instructions, he is said to have replied, " I would rather write upon the hearts of living men than upon the skins of dead sheep." There is, in fact, a vital power in the immediate contact of the living teacher with living minds, an impression made upon the sensibilities and dispositions of men, which leaves an influence that written words and books cannot do, and that propagates itself and does not die. The great fact that our Lord, above all, did not leave one written sentence, but trusted his words of everlasting import and saving power to oral communication, shows that preaching is the natural as well as the divine method of imparting truth.



Easy as the talk of children, fleeting as the passing breath, oral preaching is yet the strongest and most enduring instrumentality in the world, because the Spirit of God and the spirit of man are in it and wield it.

A peculiarly interesting illustration of the fact that preaching is the natural method of propagating truth and moral life is to be found in the example of the Stoic philosophers, and especially The Stoic  
philosophers. of the sect of Roman Cynics.

“Education fell in a great degree into their hands. Many great families kept a philosopher among them, in what in modern language might be termed the capacity of a domestic chaplain, while a system of popular preaching was created and widely diffused.”

“Of these preachers there were two classes, who differed greatly in their characters and methods. The first, who have been happily named ‘the monks of Stoicism,’ were the Cynics, who appear to have assumed among the moralists of the pagan empire a position somewhat resembling that of the mendicant orders in Catholicism. In a singularly curious dissertation of Epictetus, we have a picture of the ideal at which a Cynic should arrive, and it is impossible in reading it not to be struck with the resemblance it bears to the missionary friar.”

“The Cynic should be a man devoting his entire life to the instruction of mankind. He must be unmarried, for he must have no family affections to divert or dilute his energies. He must wear the meanest dress, sleep upon the bare ground, feed upon the simplest food, abstain from all earthly pleasures, and yet exhibit to the world the example of uniform cheerfulness and content. No one, under pain of provoking the divine anger, should embrace such a career unless he believes himself to be called and assisted by Jupiter. It is his mission to go

among men as the ambassador of God, rebuking, in season and out of season, their frivolity, their cowardice, and their vice. He must stop the rich man in the market-place. He must preach to the people in the highway. He must know no respect and no fear. He must look upon all men as his sons, and upon all women as his daughters. In the midst of a jeering crowd he must exhibit such a placid calm that men may imagine him to be of stone. Ill-treatment and exile and death must have no terror in his eyes, for the discipline of his life should emancipate him from every earthly tie, and when he is beaten he should love those who beat him, for he is at once the father and brother of all men.”<sup>1</sup>

Even the use of texts by these philosophers is noticeable.

“They acquired the habit of never enforcing the simplest lesson without illustrating it by a profusion of ancient examples, and by detached sentences from some philosopher, which they employed much in the same way as texts of Scripture are often employed in the writings of the Puritans.”<sup>2</sup>

Judaism in its relation to Christian preaching is a theme upon which we cannot now dwell; but although Judaism had infinitely higher ideas of God and of man than heathenism ever did, yet it could not teach man the way of redemption and the saving knowledge of God, since it was, to the sinful soul, rather the letter that kills than the spirit that makes alive. Yet it was a system preparatory to the gospel. It formed historically, through its synagogue teachings, the prelude to the model of both Christian worship and Christian preaching. It

<sup>1</sup> Lecky's "Hist. of European Morals," v. i. p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

set forth, above all, the primary truth of the righteousness of the law. It awaked yearnings after God, and the profound sense of sin as well as the sense of God's displeasure against sin. But the Pharisees quenched the true life of the Mosaic faith in externalism, and a dogmatic self-righteousness; the Sadducees, pretending to restore Judaism to its original life and spirit, and to relieve it from the bondage of forms, brought in a chilling rationalism; the Essenes, the ascetics and mystics of Hebraism, sought to find religion in the subjective feeling which disregarded the outward life and the act of duty.<sup>1</sup> Could these, in their exclusive, minute, and arbitrary system, preach the spiritual message of God to men? Could they, who shut out all but themselves from Jerusalem, establish the universal city and kingdom of God? Yet they were, in their narrowness and perversity, the precursors of this kingdom, and of the preachers of this kingdom, as seen in an eminent degree in John the Baptist, who was a preacher of repentance. They showed men their need of God, and they proved to men their own inability to lead them to God and eternal life. If they could not do it, who could? The pagan world had lost the torch of natural religion, and had sunk into the darkness of atheism. The full time for the preaching of the gospel of life and salvation through Jesus Christ had come.

#### SEC. 5. *Preaching of Christ and of the Apostles.*

There had then truly come to be an absolute necessity for the pure word of truth in the world, in order that men might be instructed in a spiritual religion. Human means of making men better and of bringing them to

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Prag. Gesch.," pp. 25, 26.

God through the administration of ordinances had failed, and would continue to fail, and the only way left to win

**Preaching the peculiar Christian instrumentality.** and save men was by the manifestation of the truth in pureness and love. The means appointed to do this, viz., preaching, was so simple that it might be called spiritual.

Its method of operation was by reason, sympathy, and love. It was psychological, and not physical. It was the instrumentality of the word speaking to the soul. The preaching of the word, addressed objectively to the understanding and reason of men, and enforced subjectively in the heart by the Holy Spirit, who is called the "Spirit of God," the "Spirit of Christ," was the divinely appointed means of converting the world.

The preaching of Christ, historically considered, must be regarded as the initiative, and the model of Christian preaching. Peter said to Cornelius (Acts 10 : 37), "That word ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, *and began from Galilee*," with doubtless heartfelt reverent allusion to the preaching of Christ.

**Preaching of Christ historically considered.**

Our Lord himself relied upon and practised this simple means of establishing and diffusing the kingdom of God. As has been already set forth, Christ was not ashamed to be, and to prepare himself to be, a preacher.

In his preparation for the work of preaching, Christ did not, it is true, frequent the Jewish theological schools,

**His preparation.** and he opposed the teachings of the recognized Hebrew instructors of the day ; but he built himself upon the Scriptures of the

Old Testament, coming not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He dwelt also upon the divine thoughts of his own heart, meditating upon the needs and sorrows



of a world that had departed from God. May we not also suppose that he studied the revelation of God in nature? In the vale of Nazareth, as in a quiet mountain chapel or sanctuary,

" His daily teachers had been woods and rills,  
The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

The deeper consciousness of a higher nature once awaked and constantly growing within him constituted him the interpreter of God's word and its infallible teacher.

After thirty years of silent preparation he came forth as a preacher ; and in his preaching he proceeded upon a certain method. He grafted the new truth upon the old letter, thus bringing forth His method;  
and form  
of preaching. " things new and old," accommodating himself to the point of view of his hearers.

Christ preached from the Old Testament as his text, bringing Christian truth into true relations to the ancient revelation. He based his teachings upon the moral law, both revealed and natural.

The form of his preaching was varied, and was in accordance with the character and culture of his hearers. In the first place it was, as we have seen, oral address or preaching. He wrote not but upon men's hearts. He trusted to the spoken word. " The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." " He sent forth his word and healed them." Then it is noticeable that the principle of adaptation was exquisitely manifested in all that he said. " He knew all men" (John 2 : 24). He put himself upon their level. He never made a mistake as to the character of his audience. Before the learned Pharisees he spoke of the law and the way of righteousness ; with the common people he descended to familiar illustrations. To the soldier he spoke

of duty ; to the rich man of benevolence ; to the corrupt Samaritan woman, of nationality and of infidelity of living ; to those who were to suffer persecution, of the glories of the kingdom of heaven.

Again, his divine skill as a preacher was shown in that he set forth the spiritual truth in a concrete form, having life in itself, and as a seed-truth to be fructified by the thought and experience of the hearer. To sum up the great characteristic of Christ's preaching, it might reverently be thus expressed : that essential truth—truth which is necessary for the soul's life—was conveyed by him in such a way, or with such clearness, naturalness, and vivid illustrative force, that this truth came to be apprehended, not only by the minds or understandings, but in the hearts of those who heard him. In his words they looked upon the very countenance of truth. His preaching mirrored the thoughts of their minds and the disposition of their hearts—the man of the heart. It was spiritual preaching. They saw the truth, and loved it or hated it. He penetrated to the true character or real love of those whom he addressed. He possessed in its full power the efficiency of sympathy. He reached every one, because he loved every one ; and no preacher can do much with hearts unless he is in vital union with Christ—with his spirit of love. This will teach him how to reach the hearts of different men. When Christ preached to his disciples, it was one thing ; when to the unbelieving Jews, it was another ; but there was ever a fundamental truth, a fact concerning God and man's relation to him, a principle of divine life which was already acknowledged by the conscience, or revealed in the Scriptures ; and this fact, principle, or truth, be it terrible or joyful, was set before the people in a way that showed a mastery of the human heart. He not only had, in a per-

fect degree, that gentleness which belonged, for example, in some lower sense, to the character and preaching of Fénélon, and which causes men to love the truth, and mildly insinuates itself into the soul and awakens the most tender thoughts and affections, creating the consciousness of reconciliation and peace, but he had also in a perfect degree the virile force of John Knox and of the old prophets—the terrible majesty of justice, the wrath of the purest Being in the universe against sin or whatever is opposed to goodness. But this quality of terribleness was in some sense accidental, though necessarily so. Love was the underlying power of all his preaching, its essential nature, as it was also the attractive power of his life and of his death, “drawing all men unto him.” Neither his hearers, nor any men after them, will ever forget or really disbelieve the truth of the forgiving mercy and love of the Heavenly Father, as set forth in the parable of the “Prodigal Son.” Therefore the teachings of Christ, in a higher sense than the words were originally used, are a *κτῆμα ἐς αἶνι*. They will not drop out of the world’s heart.

May we not, as preachers, profit from Christ’s preaching? Should we not earnestly study him as a preacher? Should we not strive after his sympathy, popularity, life, truth, naturalness, adaptation, and variety?

He indeed is our exemplar in preaching that word of God which is able to make wise unto life eternal.

But Christ’s personal instruction was brief. It was of the utmost importance that instrumentalities should be reared up whereby to transmit Christ’s teaching, and publish abroad this “word of healing.” One of the objects, therefore, of Christ’s thought and care was to prepare preachers who should come after him—who were to learn to teach the same word of God that he taught,

“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

As to the form of their preaching he did not particularly prescribe, leaving it to the promptings of the Spirit and of their own minds, and of the circumstances and wants of the age. But the material of their preaching, the substance of the faith they taught, was to be the “gospel” (*τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*). They were to preach this gospel of the kingdom to all men, to all the world until Christ came.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (*κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*).

Let us now ask, What is the “gospel” which the first disciples of Christ were to herald to all men, and which we also are to preach?

The “gospel” is usually interpreted to mean “glad tidings.” This is correct, but does not quite express the

full force of *εὐαγγέλιον*. This word is composed of two words, *εὖ*, which is strictly the neuter of *εὖς*, good, and *ἄγγελος*, *ἄγγελία*, a “messenger,” a “message,” which latter, in the compound, takes the termination *ον*; so that the full meaning of the word is “a good message,” or a message that must be delivered to men for their highest good—something implicitly needful to be delivered, something that has an element of responsibility, necessity, impulsion in it, but for which, if the messenger delivers it aright, he is to be crowned.

What, then, is this “good” or “cheering” “message” from God—this “Gode-spell” (gospel), as the old Saxon phrase is—this message that is of such a nature that it must be heard by men, and if heard aright will bring them everlasting joy and peace?



Originally it was a message of unmixed delight, uniting heaven and earth in the joy. It was a gospel of "large toleration, of tender sympathy, of cheerful hope, of joyous thanksgiving," of divine love; and let it never be made a narrow gospel, a discouraging gospel, a merely human gospel! It was sent to all men, for their good and eternal hope. "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." It is the announcement of the wondrously inspiring truth that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" that "in the fulness of time God had sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons." It was the announcement of the Son of God, who, uniting the divine and human elements in his nature, was made fit to be the Redeemer. The "gospel," then, or the "glad message," is the annunciation of Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh, comprehending in its scope his transcendent birth, his teaching, acts, miracles, death for men's sins by transferring the burden of them to himself as a suffering sin-bearer, resurrection and ascension, and the establishment in men's lives by his immanent Spirit of a kingdom of righteousness, truth, and peace, and all this as immediately connected with and forming the means of our salvation. The "gospel" is thus both a message and a means of salvation. By it a new race is to be created out of the seed of fallen man. Such texts as John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; 1 Tim. 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save

sinner, of whom I am chief"; and that inexhaustible passage, 1 Tim. 3 : 16, "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"—such texts set forth the nature of the gospel in comprehensive words, epitomizing the freeing of man from the power of evil, solving questions concerning his spiritual estate, satisfying his soul's needs, and implying the moral perfection of the race. This "gospel" does not grow old, and is the gospel of "eternal life," because it springs from divine love, and is fitted to meet the constantly recurring wants of men ; for while it is one in the unity of Christ, it is of varied application to all minds, and to all spiritual conditions.

This, evidently, was what the New Testament writers and apostles called the "gospel," as referred to 1 Cor. 15 : 1, 2 : "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand ; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye believed in vain"—the apostle then going on to state definitely what he had received, and declared as the chief things, viz. : Christ's death for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and his resurrection and ascension for our justification and eternal life. Let it be remembered that the gospel is Christ. It is wholly and entirely Christ.

With this cheering message of the redemptive work of the Son of God—this gospel of salvation to men—the apostles were put in trust. They very soon began to preach, as is proved by Peter's words to Cornelius the centurion, already quoted : "That word ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from

Galilee, after the baptism which John preached." It was a preaching under the new baptism of the Holy Ghost. The apostles preached the "word" with that earnestness and faith which is accompanied by the converting power of the Spirit. They trusted "to the power of Christ, not to human wisdom and eloquence."<sup>1</sup>

**Apostles'  
preaching  
of the  
gospel,  
in what  
peculiar.**

The apostles' preaching differed from that of preachers who came after them, and from the preaching of the present day, in this—that their preaching was principally designed to give men the truth, to proclaim to men the original "gospel," which when given other preachers were to take up, interpret, and enforce, in the sense of teaching (*διδασκαλία*); but theirs especially was the office of "heralding" the gospel (*κηρυκεία*). They went everywhere as "messengers" and "evangelists" to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God. They were named (*κήρυκες καὶ ἀπόστολοι*) (1 Tim. 2:7). Paul declares himself to be a teacher, not of "believers" and of "saints," but of the "Gentiles." The missionary spirit pervades the whole "Acts of the Apostles"; it is aggressive, like the sunrise, and it insists on perpetual advance.<sup>2</sup>

Whenever these "heralds" had gathered a congregation, or church, of believers together, they left them and went on to new fields. Nevertheless the apostles, and above all Paul, were true preachers, even in the commonly accepted sense. They ministered for years together to particular churches, as did Paul to the Ephesians, and James to the church at Jerusalem. We must

<sup>1</sup> De Pressensé.

<sup>2</sup> Dean Howson's "Acts of the Apostles," p. 161.

gather from their recorded instructions what was the general style and spirit of their apostolic preaching.

Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost has been called "the first Christian sermon"; but we prefer to date, as we have done, Christian preaching from a higher source—from the preaching of Christ.

Preaching  
of Peter.

Peter's address was forcible, while at the same time it was artless and spiritual. The characteristics of it are fully seen in his letters, so rugged in form, but so full of passionate fire and sublimity; although the gravity and sobered zeal of the apostle who sinned and repented and was made "a pillar in the house of God," are also apparent.

James had a more calm, careful, measured, and authoritative utterance, moving on the even plane of Christian life with the moral element in predominance—the *ethos* rather than the *pathos* of Christianity.

Preaching  
of James.

John's preaching, we sometimes think, was all love, and so it was; but we mistake him if we suppose that it was a superficial excitation of the emotional nature—one not drawn from the deepest sources, where sleeps also the thunder of power. It was certainly characterized by what we would now call subjectiveness; but the subject lay not only in the depths of his own mind, but rather of the divine mind. He searched the mind of the Spirit, who reveals the deep things of God. He realized the truth of his own profound saying, that "He that loveth is born of God." He seemed to care little for the form or language, and more for the essential spirit of truth.

Preaching  
of John.

Paul's preaching, which is worthy of special study as a model, and of which we have undoubtedly literal exam-



ples in his epistles—the *ipsissima verba* of his ordinary addresses—was assuredly no rude or rambling speech; if his discourses were not framed upon the rules of classic eloquence (though there may be some question here), they had method, and they exhibit often in their fragmentary forms (as in the address on Mars Hill) the graces of the introduction, the vehement logic of the argument, the pathos and direct appeal of the close. His language has a marked rhetorical as well as spiritual element. It takes hold of the imagination, the sensibilities, and the conscience. Luther said of Paul's preaching :

Preaching  
of Paul.

“ His words are not dead words ; they are living creatures with hands and feet.”

His style (if we may thus speak of it) is highly periphrastic, and at times so involved as to be loose in construction, and it cannot be called formally logical, though there is a train of strong reasoning running through it, with what may be termed a natural or rational connection of parts, that appeals both to the head and the heart. It is argumentative, but at the same time not abstruse. Though brought up “ at the feet of Gamaliel,” he does not seem to have caught the endless dialectics of the Jewish doctors. The orator never loses sight of the main end, however tangled and obscure through frequent digressions his way may be. Though carried by a vehement energy of expression hither and thither, he never fails of his one purpose. In this the noble individuality of the man is seen—his singleness of mind that scorns rules, though few perhaps of his day were better acquainted with them, and his resistless feeling, that bursts through the bounds of calm discussion, which is addressed purely to the judgment.

Although Paul as an orator had probably but few

physical advantages, and was small of stature, and without a winning or commanding presence, yet he had amazing tact and knowledge of human nature. Like his Master, he did not mistake his audience. He was a Jew to the Jews, and a Greek to the Greeks. But his chief power as a preacher lay in his through-and-through conviction of the truth of the gospel, with which he believed himself to be intrusted.

The gospel was for every man, and was to be preached to all, without respect of persons. He sought to impart a knowledge of Christ to all men, and to convert the world. To do this his instrumentality was preaching ; but in preaching he placed no supreme reliance upon skill of reasoning or those forces which are purely human and partake of human art, but upon the gospel's inherent power, the power of the Spirit of God accompanying the truth preached. He was eloquent because he did not aim to be so. Although he understood the laws of thought, yet he wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, so that his preaching was apodictic or divinely self-evidencing. He knew that wisdom and learning could not save men, but Christ could. He knew nothing among men comparatively but the Cross. The Cross comprehended all that Christ had done for men. From that centre radiated all the life-giving truths of Christianity. The Cross was his theme, presented essentially in a hundred ways. That was the message which was to be given. All was sacrificed to that. The love of God in Christ comprehended all truth. He gave up everything else, counting all things but loss that he might preach Christ and him crucified. There is much indeed in the natural gifts, or the personality, of this preacher which is to be studied—his tireless will, his sagacity, his adaptation, his magnanimity, his mental

fertility and wondrous resource, his tenderness, pathos, tact, and robust common-sense, as well as his acquirements and peculiar modes of thought—his psychology ; but these all seem as nothing when compared with his faith in the power of the gospel his grasp upon divine sources of power.

His dependence was upon the Spirit of Christ. Some sects of Christians, who languish to know why they do not make progress while they feel that rationally they are superior to their neighbors, have not yet grasped the secret of the apostle's faith which brings the heart of God in vital contact with the heart of man in this divine humanity and self-sacrifice of the Son of God. His power was in this "mystery of godliness."

His preaching "was in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." His faith was literally boundless, even as his message was an unlimited one of the grace of God—that Christ came into the world to save sinners, himself the chief. The gospel was an unwearying theme to him, because it was the manifestation of the divine love. He fed upon this heavenly bread as the nourishment of his own soul—it was Christ for him to live—and he would give these riches of the knowledge of the Son of God to other men, with the hope that all would receive Christ as offered in his fulness, and that there should be built up in the world an ennobled and redeemed humanity.

Was the gospel, to Paul, a lifeless dogma comprehended in theological formulas and received by the mere cold assent of the reason as an orthodox creed? No. It was a word of life to the world. It was a direct message of the power and love of God to his human children, which it was worth losing life to proclaim. Such was Paul as a preacher. He was pre-eminently the

*preacher* among the apostles. He was, it is true, an educated man, and had experienced the influence of both the Greek and Roman cultures, as well as that of the Hebrew and Rabbinical schools ; and in this respect he was distinguished from the other disciples, who were, most of them, illiterate men ; but he was distinguished more than they all by the evangelic fervor of his faith, considering himself to be charged personally of Christ with the gospel, and desiring above all things to preach the gospel to every man to whom he was debtor in love. Therefore he is, of all human examples, perhaps, the best for preachers ; and in saying this let us not be understood as disparaging the preaching of the other disciples. Though not learned men, they were men who, like Paul, sacrificed all for their Master ; and they were specially gifted to persuade men to be reconciled to God ; they were men originally of sound minds ; they were versed in the Hebrew Scriptures ; they had a popular magnetic power, and knew how to talk to the common people—that is, the common heart of humanity. Above all, they were instructed by Christ himself, and inspired for their work by his Holy Spirit. Their preaching was the foundation on which the faith of the Church rested and was built, even as the apostle Paul declared, “ Whether it were I or they, so we preached, and so ye believed.”

The nature of the apostolic preaching might be gathered also from the peculiar circumstances and history of the primitive church ; and we shall now proceed under this general head of apostolic preaching to discuss more in detail the historical origin and rise of the regular institution of preaching in the primitive apostolic church, or as far as the New Testament narrative and testimony enable us to do so. This, it will be admitted,

Rise of  
institution  
of preaching  
in Apostolic  
Church.



is an important inquiry, bearing immediately upon the work of preachers.

After the Pentecost, the Christians, though still Jews, worshipping in the temple, naturally separated themselves more and more from the Jews in religion, and assembled daily in their own houses, in the "upper chamber of prayer" (τὸ ὑπερῶον), for Christian worship, "breaking of bread," and prayer. It lay in the nature of these assemblies that much should be said in the way of admonition, encouragement, and instruction in the things of Christ. Christian brethren could not come together without speaking much of him in whose name they were assembled. They gathered up their precious memories of his words and life, and rehearsed them often to one another. They talked about this theme, holding familiar intercommunications (ὁμιλίαι) and conversations upon this absorbing topic. The apostles, however, could not always be present on these occasions, although when present they doubtless led in the speaking and instruction, going about from assembly to assembly, in the temple, in the synagogues, and in private houses, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ (Acts 5 : 42). But in the apostles' absence those best fitted to answer questions and make addresses were called upon ; and when by degrees the suspicion of the priests and leaders of the synagogues drove out the Jew-Christians from the Jewish assemblies, then, as has been said, in their own exclusive assemblies the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) began to be preached by the apostles, and by the more competent private members, though in a free, informal way, not at regular services of public worship only, but at all meetings for prayer and brotherly social intercourse, and at the "agapæ," or "feasts of love."

First  
meetings  
for  
worship.

Let us now endeavor to trace historically the earliest springs of this institution of preaching as we find it recorded in the New Testament writings.

<b>Historical head-springs of Christian preaching.</b>	The three actual head-springs of Chris-
	tian preaching were :
	1. Speaking with tongues.
	2. Prophesying.
	3. Teaching.

(1.) Speaking with tongues (*γλωσσαῖς λαλεῖν*). This sprang from devotional enthusiasm, sometimes amounting to ecstasy, or something that was wholly taken up with itself and with God (1 Cor. 14 : 2). It was often pure praise and thanksgiving. The form of this ecstatic and exalted spiritual praise was so far removed from the common modes of expression that it was not always understood ; it was in strange forms of expression—"groanings that could not be uttered," and even sometimes in foreign, unknown, and unspeakable words<sup>1</sup> (Rom. 8 : 26 ; 1 Cor. 14 : 27, 28).

(2.) Prophesying (*προφητεύειν*). This was speaking as freely moved by the Holy Spirit, for the exhortation, comfort, and encouragement of the brethren (1 Cor. 14 : 30, 31).

The New Testament "prophet" spoke of God's power and goodness, Christ's love and atoning death, man's perishing estate through sin (Acts 10 : 46 ; 19 : 6). As the "evangelists" spoke of the simple facts of Christ—the essential gospel—the "prophets" spoke in inspiring terms of the triumphs and glories of the gospel, its conquest of heathenism, and the future reign of Christ.

Prophesying was more or less uniform, and was a more

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 40, *seq.*

calm and comprehensive method than "speaking with tongues." It had less of exaltation, and was governed by that divine spirit which is the spirit of order and not of confusion.

1 Cor. 14 : 1-5 (literally translated) : "I beseech you to follow earnestly after love ; yet I would have you delight in the spiritual gifts, but especially in the gift of prophecy. But he who speaks in tongues, speaks not to men, but to God ; for no man understands him, but with his spirit he utters mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks to men, and builds them up, with exhortation and with comfort. He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself alone ; but he who prophesies builds up the church. I wish that you had all the gift of tongues, but rather that you had the gift of prophecy ; for he who prophesies is above him who speaks in tongues, unless he interpret the sounds he utters, that the churches may be built up thereby."

But although better fitted for edification than speaking with tongues, and wonderful in their awakening power, yet these prophesyings had nevertheless an extraordinary and irregular character. They were like, and were, immediate inspirations of the Spirit. They inwardly strengthened the faith of believers by the very words given by the Holy Spirit.

(3.) Teaching (*διδασκαλία*). To meet, however, a deeper want than feeling or imagination could supply, there was need of a more calm consideration of and careful instruction in divine truth.<sup>1</sup>

Teaching.

The unlearned asked of the wise about Christian faith, and the interpretation of the Scriptures. The gift of teaching, or, as it was sometimes called, of "knowl-

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 47.

edge," and of "interpretation," became at length a recognized *charisma* in the Church. The first Christians were Jews built upon the Old Testament, and their new Christian consciousness worked through the medium of the Old Testament revelation. Thus there sprang up, as in the Jewish synagogues themselves, questions and answers, explanations and interpretations, and here lay the germs of the first "homilies."

There was thus a great variety in the manner of teaching and speaking in the primitive Christian assemblies, the ecstatic speaker of tongues, the awakening prophet, the calm teacher and interpreter. There was the emotional expression and the thoughtful exposition.

But gradually the varieties and irregularities of speaking in the early Christian assemblies were done away by the apostles, as they felt not only the need of encouraging, but also of instructing or building up believers in the faith, and of presenting to the educated classes among the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles the reasonable aspects of Christian faith.

Undoubtedly, too, the "gift of tongues" had been abused; and then "interpretation" (*ἐρμηνεία*) was introduced, and the "proving of spirits" (*διακρίσις πνευμάτων*), and more clear, discriminating and comprehensible teaching took the place of the uncertain and irregular utterance of those who had gifts of tongues, and the prophets, until the apostles at length seem to have concluded that nothing which was not clearly understood, which was not rational, and appealed to the sound understanding and healthy Christian consciousness, which could not be interpreted and applied to immediate instruction, was admissible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 53.



1 Cor. 14 : 18, 19 (freely translated) : " I offer thanksgivings to God, speaking in tongues to him ; more than any of you. Yet in the congregation I would rather speak five words with my understanding, so as to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue." " Let all be so done as to build up the church."

This calm preaching capacity, which involved a more careful interpretation of the Scriptures and a more profound insight into the plan and theory of the Christian faith, was comprehended under the name, as we have already seen, of " teaching" (*διδασκαλία*).<sup>1</sup>

Reduced by  
Apostles to  
*διδασκαλία*.

This teaching *charisma* was a common good for the benefit and instruction of the Christian assembly (1 Cor. 14 : 26). But even this must finally have its limits. Although all had a right to teach, yet in each assembly there were but a few who possessed (at first the apostles alone) this gift or power of teaching. The uncultivated, it is true, sometimes spoke as they were moved by the Spirit, but few were capable of regularly instructing the assembly in Christian truth.

In this way there naturally arose the regular teaching or preaching office in the Church, exercised by those who had the gifts and the character that fitted them to teach.

What the  
preaching  
office in the  
Church  
represented.

The preaching office was still free, yet the assembly naturally listened to the most fit and gifted teacher. The best approved teacher, who knew most about the facts of Christ's life, and who had studied most deeply the theory of his religion—he was the one who was expected to speak.

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's " Gesch.," p. 58.

While the primitive Christian assembly and Church were democratic, yet, without anything like the monarchic or aristocratic idea in their worst sense, *the representative teaching ability in the Church gradually assumed prominent place and rule.*

Clement of Rome cites the following rule as one which had been handed down from the apostles relative to the appointment of Church offices : " That they should be filled according to the judgment of approved men, with the consent of the whole community."

It may have been the general practice of the presbyters themselves, in case of vacancy, to propose another of the community in place of the person deceased, and leave it to the whole body either to approve or decline their selection for reasons assigned. Where this asking for the assent of the community had not yet become a mere formality, this mode of filling church offices had the salutary effect of causing the votes of the majority to be guided by those capable of judging, and of suppressing divisions ; while, at the same time, no one was obtruded on the community who would not be welcome to their hearts.<sup>1</sup>

It was, in fact, the rule of the selection of the fittest ; and this was probably the first historic step toward the establishment of a permanent teaching, or preaching office, which, though it thus grew up naturally, was still, with the sanction of the apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is to be regarded as a divinely instituted office.

The influence of preaching (both by the apostles and other accredited teachers) upon the early Christian Church was, as there is every evidence, extraordinarily

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<sup>1</sup> See Neander's " Ch. Hist.," Torrey's ed , 1852, v. I, p. 189.

great. The Divine Word never had more marked power than in those days of the struggles and triumphs of primitive Christianity, although this was but the promise of things to come. An ardent sentiment of personal love toward Christ was maintained in the Church by the prophet, the exhorter, and the speaker of tongues.

**Influence of  
preaching  
on the early  
Christian  
Church.**

Christ as a person rather than Christ as a simple creed, was cherished. A mighty influence of the Spirit frequently accompanied the speech of these early witnesses for Christ, and an absorbing conviction of the truth as an inspiration of heaven seized upon men. The regular teacher, or preacher (*διδάσκαλος*), however, even more than these, founded the people in a deep-grounded and intelligent faith; in the "sound doctrine" spoken of by Paul in first chapter of 1 Timothy; and, above all, in charity and holy living—as in (Acts 2 : 42-47; Acts 4 : 8-13; Acts 4 : 32-35; Acts 6 : 1-4; 1 Tim. 1 : 5).

This was not only true of the Church in Jerusalem, but of the Gentile churches, and of the mixed Jewish and heathen churches of Asia and Europe. Such noble fruits of preaching were not, it is true, without admixtures of evil fruit springing from corrupt teaching, from the ostentation and pride of speakers of tongues, and from false prophets and teachers. Many of these were totally illiterate persons (*ιδιώται*). Notwithstanding, however, these drawbacks, the great influence of the preaching of the gospel, in the earliest times of Christianity, everywhere wrought its wonderful results in the conversion of souls, and in the bringing of men and of nations in three continents under the sway of Christian faith.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See De Pressensé, "Early Years of Christianity," p. 216.

SEC. 6. *Preaching in the first two Centuries.*

The business of the "preacher" or "teacher" in the Church having now become a recognized fact, and certain persons being regarded as better fitted than others for this work of public instruction, all this went to confirm and establish *the regular preaching office*, which came to have its distinct and important place in public worship.

**Preaching  
had a  
regular place  
in public  
worship.**

Speaking of the period somewhat later than this immediately post-apostolic period, one author says: "The reading of the Scriptures, and, above all, the administration of the sacraments, had a more important place (than preaching) in the hearts of those earnest worshippers. It was desirable that every Christian should be familiar with the sacred writings; and when manuscripts were costly, and the bulk of every congregation consisted of poor persons, hearing the word was a necessary substitute for private reading, and was therefore one of the most important parts of public worship. And, on the other hand, baptism, the sign of the first admission into communion with the Redeemer and his Church, and the Lord's Supper, the sign of a constant growth"<sup>1</sup>—these also had a prominent place.

Notwithstanding the truth of these remarks, preaching obtained and held an acknowledged place in all Christian public worship. It was early introduced in about the same place and order that it now occupies; for example, there were the same elements of worship then as now—viz., psalmody; reading the Scriptures (the law and the prophets, and the Gospels and Epistles when these came into vogue); teaching or preaching, which was chiefly

<sup>1</sup> Moule's "Christian Oratory during the first five Centuries," p. 51.



expository and drawn directly from the scriptural lessons of the day ; prayer, both liturgical and spontaneous ; and the partaking of the Lord's Supper ; the last was an invariable incident, in the earliest times, of public worship.

Preaching, it is true, had not as yet a very definite form beyond the general fact or name of *διδασκαλία*, although, as we have already hinted, we find the word *ὁμιλεω* used casually in the Scriptures, as in Luke 24 : 14, 15 ; Acts 20 : 11 (*ὁμιλήσας ἄχρις αὐγῆς*) ; and in the first two centuries preaching addresses were sometimes called "homilies," and even "sermons," as those of Valentinus and Clemens Romanus. We learn the style and matter of these earliest "homilies" from the remains of the writings and of the sacred orations of the apostolic fathers and the earliest preachers.

Some of these names of the first two centuries, which are familiar as those also of theologians, are Clemens Romanus, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp and Barnabas, the philosopher Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athanagoras, Theophilus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Irenæus, and the fiery-minded Tertullian.

**Great  
preachers  
of the  
first two  
centuries.**

The addresses of the preachers of this period were chiefly of three kinds :

1. Simple and artless relations concerning the crucified and risen Saviour, without much of a deeper spiritual or even rhetorical comprehension of the truth, perhaps in running comment upon the Gospels and Epistles read, or in answers to questions.

**Three  
kinds of  
early  
Christian  
preaching.**

2. Philosophical treatment of divine truth by men who had imbibed the influence of the Oriental philosophies.

oftentimes mingling the greatest absurdities with whatever of truth they possessed.

3. The instructions of some really educated men among the members, who were yet truly pious minds, and taught the pure gospel in a more systematic and comprehensive way, and often with real eloquence.<sup>1</sup>

But the condition of Christians and Christian assemblies in these first centuries was, as a general rule, exceedingly humble.

<p><b>Humble character of the first preachers.</b></p>	<p>The first disciples were commonly people from the more obscure walks of life, and, as in the apostolic times, "not many mighty, not many noble were called."</p>
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Celsus derides the early Christians, calling them "wool-dressers, shoemakers, the most illiterate and rude men, zealots who proclaimed the gospel, first of all, among women and children"; and yet there were never wanting people of higher culture among the Christians, who were amply able to instruct and preach. Yet even these often openly scorned the aids of human learning, and declared the gospel to be wholly in the power and Spirit of God.

Some Christian assemblies refused to receive men of rank as their instructors, and in preference chose poor and pious men, as in the third century one Firmus, a tradesman, was elected "presbyter;" also Severus, a clothier, and Alexander, a charcoal-burner, whose blackened face excited laughter among the young, were appointed preachers.<sup>2</sup>

Still, those illustrious preachers whom we have previously named, and many others, were chosen on account of their fitness for the work of instruction. Teachers,

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Id., p. 89.

too, began to undergo "proving" in regard to their capacities. The apostles themselves, we have reason to believe, instructed some men especially to be teachers: thus Clement of Rome was probably taught by the apostle Peter; Ignatius by Peter, Paul, and John; and Polycarp by John.

**Eminent  
exceptions.**

About the year 170 A.D. the system of catechumenical instruction was introduced, and toward the end of the second century the distinction between *κλήρος* and *λαός* was begun to be made. Nevertheless, it must be said that in these first centuries the *διδάσκαλοι* and *προσ-  
τῶτες* were generally like from like—men freely chosen out of the whole body ecclesiastically their equals in rank.

**Distinction  
between  
*κλήρος*  
and *λαός*.**

But later it came about that skill in preaching was esteemed to be a requisite of the presbyteral office. It lay indeed in the very nature of things that as the Church increased and its wants were developed, the necessity of having trained and skilful teachers should be felt.

Public Christian worship after the Church had come out from Judaism was at first held, as we have seen, in private houses, without temples, altars, or statues.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish and Gentile Christians must have felt a certain loss in these outward things connected with worship, which was, however, more than made up to them in the truth that every Christian was himself a spiritual temple to the Lord, and that where two or three were gathered together there was Christ, the Lord of souls, in the midst of them. But from the increased size of the assemblies, and probably in imitation of the Jewish syna-

**Public  
worship  
and  
Church  
edifices.**

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p.

gogue, or more probably the Jewish "houses of prayer," Christians at the end of the second century began to have their own houses of worship. In the year 202, for example, a beautiful church edifice is known to have been reared in Odessa.

The smaller places of worship, or "houses of prayer," *εὐτήρια, προσευτήρια*, and *κυρίακα*, were furnished in a simple and unostentatious manner—a wooden table for the feast of bread and wine, and a higher seat or stand for the reading of the Scriptures and preaching. Those who gathered in these assemblies were called, from a classic Greek word for public assemblage, *ἐκκλησίαι*, and hence the buildings themselves took the name of "churches."

There is no doubt that in these early assemblies for worship, at first held daily, then on stated days for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and then regularly on Sunday, preaching, though of that artless and spontaneous sort which has been mentioned, formed a regular part, but not yet so uniform and established as in the fourth and fifth centuries. It occupied a prominent place on fast and feast days, such as Pentecost, Epiphany, Advent, Good Friday, and the days appointed for the commemoration of the deaths of saints and martyrs. On these occasions preaching assumed a more formal and oratorical character.

It may seem to be a somewhat extraordinary fact that few or hardly none of the actual sermons of this first

Few  
sermons  
of this  
period  
extant.

period of the Church have come down to us. This probably was due to the fact that preaching was so spontaneous, so purely a moving of the Spirit, that it did not take on a literary form that could be handed down. And it must also be said that the first preachers



trusted little to human art ; but, as Greek culture prevailed, the necessity of more attention to form is apparent.

We will notice, and that in a very brief manner, but three examples of the more noted preachers of this period—viz., Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Yet let us not forget the first artless, spontaneous, free and varied forms of Christian preaching, nor consider that our formal sermons or regular orations from the pulpit on the Lord's day are the only, or even the most primitive and apostolic way, of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to men ; and this fact steadily borne in mind may keep us from becoming stereotyped, formal, and scholastic preachers of the living word of God. We should strive to be free men in Christ Jesus, though all the rules of all the schools be broken.

Clement, Bishop of Rome, has been supposed to be the same Clement who is spoken of in Philippians 4 : 3, and to have lived in close intimacy with the apostles, or at least with two of them. He was probably the third bishop of Rome.

**Clement  
of Rome.**

Within these last years his very house is said to have been discovered, under whose roof the apostle Paul may have met the little church that was planted in Rome ; and in much that he says we catch a glimpse of the earlier times of the Christian Church, and its trials, persecutions, and customs. He was a teacher in whose discourses and letters (we do not refer to the so-called Clementine Epistles, which were undoubtedly written by some Ebionitish Christian) there is a pure evangelic spirit. He is ethical rather than doctrinal. His epistle to the church of Corinth is evidently more of a "homily" or "sermon" than an epistle, and is perhaps the oldest form of a Chris-

tian homily extant after the time of the apostles. That which is named the Second Epistle of Clement is manifestly nothing but the fragment of a homily.<sup>1</sup> These discourses, as well as the discourses of the earliest Christian preachers after the apostles, are remarkable for their popular setting forth of the virtue or holiness or divine charity of the Christian life—of the very spirit and essence of the Gospels. Some of his sentences in praise of Christ's divinity are of considerable power and eloquence.<sup>2</sup> He deprecates strife over the bishop's office which had already arisen, and is strenuous with almost an apostle's strength in regard to the purity of the ministerial function. He is at times full of burning vigor of language. He says : " Let him that hath love in Christ fulfil the commandments of Christ. Who can declare the bond of the love of God ? Who is sufficient to tell the majesty of its beauty ? The height whereunto love exalteth is unspeakable. Love joineth us unto God ; love covereth a multitude of sins ; love endureth all things, is long-suffering in all things. There is nothing coarse, nothing arrogant in love. Love hath no divisions ; love maketh no sedition ; love doeth all things in concord. In love were all the elect of God made perfect ; without love nothing is well-pleasing to God ; in love the Master took us unto himself ; for the love which he had toward us Jesus Christ our Lord hath given his blood for us by the will of God, and his flesh for our flesh, and his life for our lives. Ye see, dearly beloved, how great and marvellous a thing is love, and there is no declaring its perfection. Who is sufficient to be found therein, save those to whom God shall vouchsafe it ? Let us there-

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<sup>1</sup> Neander's " Ch. Hist.," v. I, p. 659.

<sup>2</sup> Paniel's " Gesch.," p. 106.

fore entreat and ask of his mercy that we may be found blameless, standing apart from the factiousness of men. All the generations from Adam unto this day have passed away, but they that by God's grace were perfected in love dwell in the abode of the pious; and they shall be made manifest in the visitation of the kingdom of God."

Clement of Alexandria was born about 150 A.D., and lived during the reigns of Severus and Caracalla. His works, as now existing, are very fragmentary, and are chiefly of an apologetic character. His style is discursive and wants method, but there are passages—probably first delivered as sermons—of extraordinary vigor. The literary and philosophic elements are kept in subordination to the Christian and spiritual. But the philosophical element is marked: thus he dwells with some force of reasoning upon the influence of the "Logos," or "Divine Word," as the image of God in man, as God's essential wisdom, as the light leading to a higher knowledge of divine things, or the true *γνωσις*. He was engaged mind and soul in fighting gnosticism. He is occasionally declamatory and repetitious, as if his addresses were originally extemporaneous. Origen was his disciple, and he is thought to have given the stimulus to Origen's mind, even as Tertullian did to Cyprian's mind, showing the sway exerted by one great preacher over another down the ages, as was also marked in the influence of Augustine upon Luther.

**Clement of  
Alexandria.**

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, who belongs to the later half of the second century, exerted an immense moulding power upon the discipline and moral culture of the Western Church, which afterward developed into the asceticism of the mo-

**Tertullian.**

nastic systems. He was the son of a proconsul stationed at Carthage, and was bred a rhetorician, or advocate. He did not embrace Christianity until the full age of manhood, and then he confessed it with the whole energy of his being. Tertullian was well acquainted with philosophy, but at the same time he despised it as an endless source of error and heresy ; and (until his own partial defection from the faith) he sought his inspiration from the word of God and the best Christian writings. " What must render this man a phenomenon presenting special claims to attention is the fact that his Christianity is the inspiring soul of his life and thoughts ; that out of Christianity an entirely new and rich inner world developed itself to his mind ; but the leaven of Christianity had first to penetrate through and completely refine that fiery, bold, and withal rugged nature. We find the new wine in an old bottle, and the tang which it contracted there may easily embarrass the inexperienced judge."<sup>1</sup> His dogmatic or doctrinal teaching was free, and perhaps of no great theological weight, but his ethical teaching was of the most earnest character, and into that he threw his whole energy. He outdid in severeness the moral standard of the gospel itself. He carried his ideas of the supreme virtue of chastity to such a pitch that he regarded marriage as a degradation of the soul. It is worth noticing that those of his writings which bear the false stamp of Montanism may be easily distinguished from his purer Christian writings and discourses.<sup>2</sup> As a preacher or orator he had a sharp penetration and a fiery phantasy, which gave him vivid and original conceptions of spiritual truth.<sup>3</sup> He had wit, irony, sarcasm, and a

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<sup>1</sup> Neander's "Ch. Hist.," v. i. p. 683.

<sup>2</sup> Id., p. 684.

<sup>3</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 124.



rough positive assertion that carried all before it—in fine, great qualities and great faults.

His style was mixed, obscure, profound, full of darkness as well as light, of glowing depth as well as celestial height. His Latin is pervaded with Punic corruptions, but through all shines his great genius resplendent. He was a tower of strength to his friends, and a terrible adversary to his enemies. His most eloquent sermons were those *De Spectaculis*, in which his soul was moved against the licentiousness of the heathens, and especially against the gladiatorial shows of the ferocious Roman civilization. As a brief illustration of the vivid and fervid character of his pulpit eloquence we give the close of one of his sermons on “ Repentance,” in which he employs the tremendous illustration of the recent destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius ; and he applies this in way of warning to catechumens, and says to them :

“ Think much on hell-fire, which this repentance alone can quench. Set before you the greatness of the punishment of hell, so that you shall not delay to lay hold of the salvation which Heaven stretches out to you. What a prison-house of eternal fire that must be, if even by one of its flues such flames burst forth that cities are totally destroyed, or lie in constant peril of destruction ! The highest mountains, pregnant with fire, are rent asunder, and who can fail to see in these heaving and devouring mountains the symbols of everlasting hell ? Who can fail to regard such sparks as messengers of an endlessly great multitude, and as threatening foretokens of the ‘ wrath to come.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's “ *Gesch.*,” p. 133 ; see also Moule, “ *Chr. Or.*,” pp. 83, 84, 86, 87.

Singularly enough (or perhaps not singularly), in Tertulian and other preachers of the first and second centuries there is a mingling of pagan ideas and pagan elements of culture with the pure Christian doctrine and morality. Christian faith does not yet seem to have asserted its exclusive and authoritative place in preaching; but whatever is drawn from the Scriptures is pure doctrine, yet not so much in the shape of theological as ethical doctrine, the Spirit of Christ being irresistibly infused into the teaching and into the manners and life of disciples.

SEC. 7. *Preaching of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Centuries.*

While among the earliest preachers the influence of the education and philosophy in which they had been trained (as was remarked at the close of the last section) is plainly perceptible, yet one of the most important facts in the history of the first Christian preaching is **Founded upon the Scriptures.** that it was directly drawn from the Scriptures. There never seemed to be a doubt but that the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, the word of God, was the main source of preaching. Though there was much of the irregular style of address, yet the speaker even more and more began to confine himself to the explanation of the portion of Scripture which was read as the lesson of the day in the public service, either from the Old Testament or the New. But it was not until Origen's time that preaching began to be founded upon any definite hermeneutical basis—viz., that a passage of Scripture should be taken and consecutively explained. Preaching was more diffuse, varied, and accidental, and although expository in style was not so methodically.

The expository method of Origen characterized the preaching of the third and succeeding centuries. Instead, however, at first of there being much unity in the treatment of the text, Origen and his school followed the habit of parceling out and dismembering the original text, in this way making many distinct homilies upon every member or separate clause. There was no formal unity in the discourse, no grouping together of the whole chapter or book.

**Influence  
of Origen's  
method.**

The expository method of Origen was also combined with an allegorical mode of treating the Scriptures. The allegory was indeed used by Christ himself and by his apostles; it was a favorite method of the Old Testament prophets, nor was it opposed to the usage of classical teaching, as may be seen pre-eminently in the writings of Plato; but never was this method carried to such an extent as by Origen and his school, who seized especially upon the fruitful field of the Old Testament, from a New Testament point of view. This allegorizing interpretation ran into the greatest extravagances, often going through whole books of Scripture. It must be said, however, of Origen himself (of whom we shall speak more circumstantially) that he was a true Christian preacher, striving earnestly to come at the original truth of Scripture, and making the word of God the groundwork of a certain prophetic and spiritual analogy, or allegory, not being content with the literal truth.

**The  
allegorical  
method.**

The riches of Christian philosophy began also to be opened, and the rationale of the system of divine redemption to be discussed. The theory of Christianity was viewed in the light of a new philosophy. Conflicts with heathen systems and schools, and also attempts to

harmonize Christianity with Greek philosophy, increased this tendency ; and we see, especially in the sermons of the Alexandrian school, as well as in the discourses of Hippolytus, this marked tendency to philosophical preaching. Christian thought met pagan thought, and annihilated it when false, or assimilated and sanctified it when true. In the hands of less serious teachers, preaching already began to admit of the admixture of corrupt speculation ; there sprang up the custom of public and private teaching of exoteric and esoteric truth, until at length the pure character of early evangelical preaching was much obscured.

Although the laity retained for a long time their right to preach, "they were at length circumscribed in many ways, and were not permitted to preach in the church itself, but in the baptistery or some building connected with the church," and only in the presence of the bishop. But preaching gradually began to be confined to the "presbyters," and in many cases the bishops themselves strove, often with success, to monopolize altogether the preaching office.

Already in the reigns of the emperors Philip, Alexander Severus, and Galerius, Christians were permitted to build and occupy church edifices of considerable size and beauty, as the one built in 280 in Nicomedia, and in 320 at Tyre.<sup>1</sup> They did not, singularly enough, take possession of the pagan temples when permitted afterward to do so, which indeed were unfitted, by their closeness and narrowness, for Christian popular

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<sup>1</sup> Moule, p. 53.



worship, but rather of the basilicas, which afforded large spaces for the gathering of great assemblies, and which, it is a familiar fact, became the architectural type of the Christian church edifice down to the present day.

As to the times and seasons in which preaching was held, when Christianity acquired more power and freedom, the number of festival days was greatly multiplied. At the beginning of the third century and in the earlier times, preaching in many assemblies, as we have already said, was held every day ; but as the societies of Christians became more scattered the number of days on which service was held grew less.

In addition to the Sunday services and the regular feast and fast days, baptismal services, commemoration occasions, saints' and martyrs' days, all were accompanied by preaching.<sup>1</sup> The preacher was the central personage, and the preaching service began to be of considerable length, as was the case with Origen's sermons. Several consecutive sermons were often delivered by different preachers to the same assembly, the sermons being brief. The people during the preaching, as was the case in the ancient Jewish synagogue, stood—or if occasionally they were seated they all rose at the reading of the Gospels—while the preacher sat.

During the third and fourth centuries there were great changes wrought in the method of preaching—in fact, in its very theory. From its being of an artless character, preaching began to be built upon an oratorical form. It took more and more the shape of the intellectual productions of the highest classical civilization of the day. It began to vie with the performances of the Greek rheto-

Changes  
wrought in  
preaching.

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "*Gesch.*," p. 161.

rician and orator, bringing in all the helps to be derived from learning and eloquence.

Gregory Thaumaturgus, of Origen's school, deliberately constructed many of his sermons upon approved Greek models of eloquence, in which not only the rhetorical but the philosophical element was introduced; and yet the original idea of the spiritual character of preaching, and of dependence upon the Spirit, was not yet altogether lost sight of.<sup>1</sup>

Origen speaks even of a true "prophesying" being still to be found or hoped for in preaching, but not as taking the place entirely of human gifts and studies. He says, "*Sed in his quæritur, si potest esse aliquid in nobis vel ex nobis prophetiæ species, quæ non totum habeat ex Deo sed aliquantulum etiam ex humanis studiis capiat.*" Paul, he thought, spoke of this kind of prophesying (1 Cor. 12 : 31): "But covet earnestly the best gifts"; which, according to 14 : 1, meant prophesying: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." This is not the prophecy spoken of in Luke 16 : 16: "The law and the prophets even until John," but in 1 Cor. 14 : 3: "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

This ability of "prophesying" could be won, according to Origen's belief, through study, on the condition that the study be earnestly and believingly pursued to the end of preaching God's truth, and to its human results God would add what comes directly from him—the prophetic gift, or literally in his words (Commentar. ad Rom.): "*Et ideo adhibere studium ad hujusmodi prophetiam possibile nobis est, et est in nostra potestate, ut*

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 166.

*nobis in hæc operam dantibus, se secundum rationem vel mesuram fidei facimus, addatur et illa, qua ex Deo est, prophetia.*"<sup>1</sup>

Thus Origen laid the groundwork of Christian eloquence—of the inspired eloquence of the pulpit—on the theory that unto the most earnest, the most skillful, and the most conscientious use of the human powers in the interpretation of God's word and the preaching of his truth to men, the spiritual gift from God—the prophetic gift—would be added ; and every true preacher, even the humblest, might thus obtain this gift of prophecy. This is a pregnant thought, and might be applied to modern times and to all time.

In regard more particularly to the Western Church during the third and fourth centuries, although preaching was kept up, yet it was more irregular and rare than in the Eastern Church. But that it was maintained we have many proofs.

**Preaching of  
the Western  
Church.**

Thus Cyprian admonishes bishops not only to instruct others, but to learn themselves, in order that they may the better instruct others. He speaks of the preaching (*tractare*) of the bishops, and he complains that the presbyters and deacons neglected to expound the Scriptures, and to exhort, which duty belonged to their office.

**Its irregu-  
larity and  
variety.**

And so toward the end of this period Lactantius speaks indirectly of Christian preachers, although he says they are seldom cultivated and eloquent men ; and immediately after this epoch (350), Hilarius in his homiletical writings gives us a long list of preachers. During this period there was a great strife between the "bishops" and the "presbyters," on this very question of the right

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 167.

to preach, which ended in the presbyters yielding up the right to preach without the consent of the bishops,

**Strife** to the great detriment of preaching and of  
**between** Christianity.<sup>1</sup> In such circumstances pulpit  
**bishops and** eloquence could not thrive. While parties  
**presbyters.** and the clergy strove for the very right to preach, it was not likely that preaching itself would be much cultivated and ennobled. And when at last the presbyters had succumbed to the bishops on this point, the bishops had drawn upon themselves so much of other ecclesiastical power and business that they had no time to study and improve their preaching ability. The ordinary membership of the Church became more and more used to receive from their clergy the offices of outward ceremonials, of prayers and forms, and thus they themselves gradually lost the desire to hear preaching. The feast and fast seasons began also to be so multiplied that the physical effort to sustain these ceremonials made the preaching service very short, and sometimes altogether prohibited it, as says Sozomenus somewhat later in regard to the Western Church.

The most important feature in the preaching of the Western Church was doubtless the moral element.

**Moral** What was in Origen and the Oriental  
**element** preachers a kind of mystical or ideal virtue,  
**in the** was in the Western Church a more outward  
**Western** and practical quality, having relation to  
**Church.** church life and discipline, and running at length into asceticism, or the idea of sanctifying the soul through bodily mortification.

The fourth and fifth centuries present a field for Christian eloquence opened through the previous influence of

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 219.



Origen upon the style and method of preaching, which, with all its marked faults, was rarely if ever surpassed; and this was the epoch of the great patristic preachers; but it was, after all, a transition period, in which the former simpler and more biblical system of preaching culminated (perhaps in some respects we might say fossilized) into the regular sermon. Yet the sermon was long in reaching the idea (rhetorically) of a perfect discourse pervaded by a law of unity, and springing from a deeper insight of the theme. It continued to be for a long time in the form of a running exposition, in which thought was awakened and the heart was warmed, and an oratorical element was gradually introduced. But as the Church emerged into more freedom and openness of belief, and persecution was lifted, the style of preaching became naturally more and more in harmony with the current forms of persuasive address, and in accordance with rhetorical rules and Greek culture.

**A transition  
period in the  
form of the  
sermon.**

When, in the time of Constantine, Christianity became the religion of the state, a new era was inaugurated for the eloquence of the pulpit, in some respects marking an advance, in others a decadence. Christianity, in Constantine's reign, got rest for itself, and spoke out more calmly and boldly from the pulpit; but heathen and philosophical opposition was still active, and preaching was more and more forced into a dialectic and polemic current. Especially in the reign of Julian at the end of the fourth century, the ideas of heathen philosophy received a new impulse, and the Christian preacher, while he preached now without fear, yet felt himself called upon to meet every objection, to harmonize faith and reason, and to develop a higher philoso-

**Influence  
of  
outward  
events.**

phy. This had its evil and its good effects upon preaching, while a speculative spirit was thus engendered, yet at the same time there began to be a more systematic teaching of the doctrines of Christianity, and the theological or dogmatic element was developed. Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius, and Cyril of Jerusalem, and other illustrious preachers of this period, were eminently theological preachers. The controversies upon the Trinity and the Person of Christ, engaged the minds both of preachers and people. It was, in fact, distinctively the theological age. The ethical, or perhaps in many instances the higher spiritual element did not flourish as in the earlier ages, when men, suffering persecution, went for courage and hope to the pure fountains of biblical truth ; and even in the greatest preachers Christian spirituality seemed to be overborne by the dogmatic element. In the practical Chrysostom, who came after, and who recognized the freedom of the will as the foundation of morality, the ethical element predominated ; and in all true preachers since his time the dogmatic and moral elements have been more or less bound together, and have not suffered such an unnatural divorce.

Few sermons as yet had one definite theme, and the preacher was only careful to explain the connection of the verses ; or, if he discoursed upon a theme, he did not always draw it from a particular text. Gregory Nazianzen commences a sermon on peace in this way. He addresses to his hearers the apostolic form of benediction then in use—"Peace be unto you !" and they respond, "And with thy spirit."

He then proceeds at once to discourse on his theme, upon this peace which had just been pronounced : "Be-

loved Peace, thou sweet word that I have just spoken to the people and heard in return from them. I know not, it is true, if it has been spoken with an honest and worthy heart, and if the open bond of peace now formed has not been broken in the secret sight of God ; but, dear Peace, thou that art my daily thought and my ornament, that art inly bound up with the being of God—since we read in the Scriptures of ‘ the peace of God ’ and ‘ the God of peace,’ and ‘ he is our peace ’—and yet which we so little honor ; thou beloved Peace, praised by all and possessed by few, how long thou hast left us ! when wilt thou return !”<sup>1</sup>

This bold and winning freedom, this artless speaking from the heart, this extempore and spiritual manner of address, is something worthy of notice in the earliest preachers, before everything had become formal and systematized in the style of sermonizing.

In many instances, however, the theme of the discourse was distinctly announced. Thus Basil says, at the beginning of one of his discourses : “ On account of all the incidents which I have witnessed in the foregoing days, I will speak against the vice of drunkenness, and let your ears be astonished.”<sup>2</sup>

He says again, in preaching upon the twenty-third Psalm : “ If thou wilt hear what holy fear is, attend now to me.” Chrysostom, in his homily upon John, 15 : 26, 27, commences thus : “ Since it is not unknown to any of you that prayer is the first of all good things, so I was greatly pressed with inward desire to speak to you who are accustomed to worship here, upon that theme, in order that I might make you still more zealous in prayer.”

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's “ *Gesch.*,” p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, p. 272.

In the panegyrical discourses the theme was often announced, and in a highly rhetorical manner. Thus Chrysostom begins a panegyrical sermon upon the martyr Stephen with these words: "Let us crown Stephen with the flowers of eulogy, and let us bestrew him with the roses of praise. For he has long before received the real crown of righteousness which belongs to those who are victors in the good fight of faith."<sup>1</sup>

We have already more than once suggested that the evidences of rhetorical culture had begun to appear even in these early times in preaching, and, in fact, during the latter part of the fourth and fifth centuries it reached its height. Of course in the earliest Christian preaching, certainly until the period of the fourth and fifth centuries, we cannot look for much of art, although there was eloquence without the consciousness of it. The preachers were generally earnest men, confessing their faith at the peril and often the cost of their lives, impelled by a lofty purpose which made the mere idea of art seem insignificant. The moral element in preaching was then, as it always will be, of infinitely more importance than the artistic. Preaching was persuading men to secure their eternal interests by accepting the grace and salvation which Christ the incarnate Son of God brought them. With these early preachers the end absorbed the means. They were too much taken up with the real claims and the transcendent truths of Christianity to be attentive to the mere art of discourse, or oratory; yet there was then, and is now, such a thing as eloquence in the pulpit, because all the skill of man, all his powers of thought and art, were made for the

**Evidences  
of Art—  
unity of  
form—  
oratorical  
diction.**

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 273.



glory of God, and should be freely consecrated to his service. Both in form and diction, sermons began to assume the appearance of art. The oratorical period of the preaching art, with all its merits and all its faults, is to be found in the fourth and fifth centuries, from the time of the establishment of national Christianity, in about the year 324, to the fall of the Western Empire.

There were, however, then as in all ages of the Church, different kinds of preachers—some who were especially theological preachers, such as Athanasius and the two Gregories, and also in many respects Chrysostom. There were also the practical and ethical class of preachers, such as was eminently Chrysostom. There were likewise mystical preachers like Macarius, and ascetic preachers, as Tertullian.

**Variety in  
style of  
preaching.**

But all these were more or less affected by the Greek culture ; some of them, who were rhetoricians before they became preachers, carrying their rhetorical style to an extravagant pitch, as did Gregory Nazianzen.

As to the topics of preaching during the middle and latter parts of these centuries, one author thus sums them up : “ The nature and destiny of the soul, future rewards and punishments, the perfections and mercies of God, repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, the creation, the nature of man, angels, the desperate condition of evil spirits, the true faith, the triumphs of the Church, and damnable heresies.”

**Topics of  
preaching.**

A comprehensive passage from Neander’s “ Church History ” gives us a graphic picture of the preaching of this brilliant period of the fourth and fifth centuries.

“ As to the relation of the sermon to the whole office of worship, this is a point on which we meet with the most

opposite errors of judgment. Some, who looked upon the clergy only as officiating priests, and who considered

**Neander's** the main parts of Christian worship to consist in the magical effects of the priestly **view of the** services, were hence greatly inclined to **preaching of** overvalue the liturgical element of worship. **this period.**

“The gift of teaching, they regarded, as something foreign from the spiritual office, as they supposed the Holy Ghost, imparted to the priestly ordination, could be transmitted to others only by his sensible mediation. Others, however, and on account of the rhetorical style of culture which prevailed among the higher classes in the large cities of the East—this was especially the case of the Greek Church—gave undue importance to the didactic and rhetorical part of worship, and did not attach importance enough to the essentials of Christian fellowship and of common edification and devotion. Hence the church would be thronged when some famous speaker was to be heard, but only a few remained behind when the sermon was ended, and the church prayers followed. ‘The sermon,’ said they, ‘we can hear nowhere but at church; but we can pray just as well at home.’ Against this abuse Chrysostom had frequent occasion to speak in his discourses preached at Antioch and Constantinople. Hence, too, without regard to the essential character of the Church, a style borrowed from the theatre or lecture-rooms of declaimers was introduced into the church assemblies, as these were frequented for the purpose of hearing some orator celebrated for his eloquent language, or his power of producing a momentary effect on the imagination or the feelings. Hence the custom of interrupting such speakers, at their more striking or impassioned passages, with noisy testimonials of approbation (*ὑπότρος*). Vain eccle-

siastics, men whose hearts were not full of the holy cause they professed, made it the chief or only aim of their discourses to secure the applause of such hearers, and hence labored solely to display their brilliant eloquence or wit, to say something with point and effect. But many of the better class, too—such men as Gregory Nazianzen—could not wholly overcome the vanity which this custom tended to foster, and thus fell into the mistake of being too rhetorical in their sermons. Men of holy seriousness, like Chrysostom, strongly rebuked this declamatory and theatrical style, and said that through such vanity the whole Christian cause would come to be suspected by the heathens.

“Many short-hand writers largely employed themselves in taking down, on the spot, the discourses of famous speakers in order to give them a wider circulation. The sermons were sometimes, though rarely, read off entirely from notes, or committed to memory; sometimes they were freely delivered after a plan prepared beforehand; and sometimes they were altogether extemporary. The last we learn incidentally, from being informed that Augustine was occasionally directed to the choice of a subject by the passage which the ‘*prælector*’ had selected for reading; when, as he tells us, he was sometimes urged by some impression of the moment to give his sermon a different turn from what he had originally proposed. We are also informed by Chrysostom that his subject was frequently suggested to him by something which he met with on his way to church, or which suddenly occurred during divine service.”

We will now mention the names of some of the great preachers of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, and

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<sup>1</sup> Neander's “*Ch. Hist.*,” v. ii. p. 316.

comment on the style and method of a few of them, particularly of Chrysostom and Augustine.

Belonging to the third century are Origen, Hippolytus, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius of Alexandria, Methodius of Tyre, and Cyprian. Of the fourth and fifth centuries, in the order of their lives, are Eusebius of Cæsarea, Athanasius of Alexandria, Meletius of Antioch, Macarius, called "the Great," and also "the Ascetic;" Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem; Ephraem the Syrian, Basil, called "the Great," Bishop of Cæsarea; Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Amphilochius of Iconium, Epiphanius of Salamis, Severianus of Gabala, Theodosius of Mop-suestia, John, surnamed Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople; Ambrose of Milan, Liberius of Rome, Hilary of Tours, Zeno of Verona, Jerome, Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

**Eminent  
preachers.**

Origen deserves the first notice, and comes also first in time, and one might say in dignity and worth—a representative preacher, and, as to method and style, the father of an innumerable multitude of preachers to this day. Origen, some authorities state, was born A.D. 185. His earnest and resolute character as a champion of the faith made him

**Origen, as a  
preacher.**

many bitter enemies, who strove to annihilate him and his works, so that some of his most important writings have either been destroyed or come down to us in a garbled shape. Coleridge lamented the loss of his complete "Hexapla" as being greater than any other loss which biblical literature ever sustained. He calls Origen the only scholar and genius combined, among the fathers—a somewhat prejudiced opinion. His "Answer to Celsus" was one of the ablest early apologies of the Christian religion.<sup>1</sup>

**A lay-  
preacher.**

<sup>1</sup> Moule, pp. 78, 79.



Until his sixtieth year he laid his prohibition upon his clerks not to take down his discourses, but then relenting, above a thousand of his homilies were taken down. While a great and eloquent preacher, he was in fact only a lay preacher ; although it is said by Ruffin that Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, authorized Origen to teach as a catechist in the Church, which, however, cannot be understood as one teaching publicly, or preaching in our sense of the term. "As a lecturer to young men his ability must have been of first-rate order, inasmuch as he succeeded Clemens (Alexandrinus) in the management of the Catechetical school at the early age of eighteen, recalling to our minds the early eminence of Melancthon in another age of the Church ; and also after his removal to Palestine a circle of youths was always about him, being trained under his influence to fill the posts of theologians and preachers to the Church." <sup>1</sup> Origen, in fact, must be looked upon as a theological teacher rather than a preacher ; but he was nevertheless a preacher both eloquent and vastly influential upon the preaching of his time and of succeeding ages.

**Theological  
lecturer  
rather than  
preacher.**

His homilies are imbedded in his voluminous writings and commentaries, numbering some thousands, which, though they have come down to us in the form of commentaries, have still a homiletical character, and were most of them undoubtedly delivered as sermons, so that we have in them true transcripts of his preaching. His preparation for the work of teaching and preaching was of the widest and most generous kind.

**Form of his  
homilies  
and their  
preparation.**

"The collation of manuscripts," he said of himself,

<sup>1</sup> Moule's "Oratory," p. 80.

“leaves me hardly time to eat, and after meals I can neither go out nor enjoy a season of rest ; but even at these times I am compelled to continue my philological investigations and the correction of manuscripts. Even the night is not granted me for repose, but a great part of it is claimed for these philological inquiries. I will not mention the time from early in the morning till the ninth and sometimes the tenth hour of the day ; for all who take pleasure in such labors employ these hours in the study of the divine word and in reading.”<sup>1</sup> Above all, the heart of a true Christian, which proved itself in firmly enduring persecution and in innumerable trials, was in Origen. The groundwork of all his preaching was

**Groundwork  
of his  
preaching.**

the interpretation of the word, and this, even in his widest and wildest allegorizing, saved him as a Christian preacher. He was perhaps in style and manner not equal as a

pulpit orator to Basil, the Gregories, and Chrysostom, of the next century. His illustrations, for instance, show

**His style  
simple  
rather  
than  
ornate.**

little invention, and are drawn almost exclusively from the figures and pictures found in the Scriptures ; perhaps this was a matter of principle with him. But his style is not, rhetorically, a rich or eloquent one, but simple and classic. Though his tendency was

to philosophical speculation, yet his reverence for the Scriptures and his passion for interpretation made him the founder of expository preaching, which had also a strong moral aim, and which exerted a vast though ir-

**As an  
interpreter.** regular and in some instances not altogether beneficial influence. “ *Ubi bene nemo melius ubi male nemo pejus.*” But the Bible, to Origen, was an

<sup>1</sup> Moule's "Oratory," p. 80.

inexhaustible treasury of moral and spiritual instruction, though drawn, it must be said, sometimes arbitrarily from the word. The Bible had, he conceived, a threefold meaning—the literal, the moral, and the spiritual—corresponding to the body, soul, and spirit, and having an analogy to the <sup>Threefold meaning in interpretation.</sup> threefold distinction of the divine nature.<sup>1</sup>

He held not only to the privilege of the most unlimited freedom of interpretation, but thought this freedom to be the vital point of true preaching. From heavenly revelation as well as from earthly events—from the histories, laws, and biographies of the Old Testament and the facts and utterances of the New—he gathers spiritual signification and teaching. According to his main axiom, that “in every tittle of Holy Scripture there must be a higher sense,” he makes every part of the word a theme for developing a higher knowledge of God, <sup>The higher sense.</sup> or spiritual “*gnosis*.” Wherever he could surmise the likeness of spiritual things he did this, not only gladly and fearlessly, but as a true principle of hermeneutics. For example, in a sermon on the history of Lot fleeing from Sodom, he interprets the narrative as signifying the escape of the soul out of its natural and unregenerate state to the appointed salvation in Christ. Lot’s wife is the soul looking back, or its yearning toward worldly pleasure—in fact, as meaning the fleshly or carnal mind which is left behind. “*Carno est enim quæ respicit semper ad vitia, quæ cum animus tendit ad salutem illa retrorsum respicit, et voluptates requirit.*” The pillar of salt in which Lot’s wife is enveloped is the barren folly, the bitter unsatisfactoriness of worldly pleasures and pursuits. The story of Lot and his

<sup>1</sup> Paniel’s “Gesch.,” p. 181.

daughters signifies the dangers that follow the Christian whose face is turned Zion-ward, from carelessness, the intemperate use of wine, or any inordinate indulgence, whether of the body or mind, which, while he thus sleeps overcome him ; and whatever is produced in such a condition is as vain and accursed as the race of Moab. The close of this homily is characteristic, and is a good specimen

men of the "conclusion" of a sermon, in the mode of Origen and his times. "Do not fail to remember, my hearers," he says, "what I have said to you in respect to the *moral sense* of this history. Remember that thou too flee from the earthly fire and consuming heat of wicked lusts, and that thou seek the height of true knowledge (*ad scientiæ altitudinem*), like the height of a mountain summit ! Beware lest thou be accompanied by those two sisters, Ambition and her greater sister Pride, who will go even up the mountain with you in order to lure you to destruction ! Beware lest these daughters of your own sinful heart make you drunken and destroy you with their embraces ! They are indeed our own daughters, because nothing outside of us can do us evil, but only what proceeds from our inmost heart and thought. But wouldst thou beget aright, beget in spiritual things, for whosoever sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Wouldst thou embrace, then embrace Wisdom, and name Wisdom thy sister, so that Wisdom may say to you (Matt. 12 : 50), 'For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' This Wisdom is Christ our Lord, to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." <sup>1</sup>

Passing over Hippolytus, who was a pupil of Origen,

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 198.



and took him for his model, and who possessed distinguished learning and great warmth and liveliness of imagination, and also Gregory Hippolytus. Thaumaturgus, a wonder-working preacher, we will speak a few words of Cyprian, chiefly as a preacher. Thascius Cäcilius Cyprianus, Bishop of Carthage, was Cyprian as a preacher. born at the beginning of the third century, of illustrious parentage. He had a careful education, and chose the profession of rhetorician, and was employed occasionally as an advocate in processes of law. His biography.

After a long time spent in heathenism he became deeply impressed with the virtuous and elevated life of many Christians in his neighborhood, and through the special instructions of the presbyter Cäcilius (whose name he took), he became a Christian in the year 246. His experience of sin, and the worthlessness of a trust in human righteousness, were strong. He put great faith in his Christian baptism, and the earnestness and devotion of his after life showed that the change in him was a real one. To make the contrast between his former luxurious style of living and his Christian life more marked, he parted with his property, distributing it among the poor. His zeal and education led him to desire the office of a preacher. In 247 he was made presbyter, and in 248 Bishop of Carthage. He was beheaded as a martyr in the persecution under Valerian, about the year 258. Cyprian was a good man, but too fond of power ; and he stirred up the envy and enmity of his presbyteral colleagues, which brought upon him many woes. He commenced, in fact, a life-long war with the college of presbyters, and was one means of building up the hierarchical power of the episcopate, which was originally only that of *primus inter pares*, and of bringing down the standard

of "presbyters" or simple "pastors." He adopted in its entirety the Levitical idea of the priesthood as being superior to all other classes, and as standing next to God himself. In his most reasonable moods he himself contended for the rights of the people as a co-ordinate governing power in the Church, but his whole life strengthened the prerogative and power of the bishops. He also contended for the outward unity of the Church, and the salvability of those alone who were in the pale of the visible Catholic Church. In spite of these views, which foreshadowed the rise of the papacy, he accomplished a great work as a preacher. He had extraordinary natural gifts as an orator. He united to a strong practical intellect, rich in original ideas, an Oriental imagination and great warmth and depth of feeling. He was of a fervid temperament, which sometimes carried him beyond the sway of reason, so that he considered some of his own utterances to be by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Without a tendency to profound doctrinal speculation, he was yet highly intelligent in this respect, and was edifying as a teacher of truth (*διδάσκαλος*). He had clear conceptions, and was able to make the truth stand forth vividly. While he had something of the fiery temperament and fancy of Tertullian, yet, on the whole, he was more mild, pleasing, and tranquil than Tertullian. Gregory Nazianzen, in his eulogy of him, said, "Cyprian's style is natural, varied, and pleasing, and, what is of more importance, the predominant qualities of his thought are plainness and correctness—the fundamental qualities of an orator. And you would find it difficult to decide to which of his qualities you would assign the palm, his ornamental diction, his happy exegesis, or his art of powerful persua-

His hierarchi-  
cal views.

His gifts  
as an  
orator.

sion." Lactantius bears witness that the heathen themselves, though they despised the Christian teaching, were in wonder at the eloquence of Cyprian. Jerome is unqualified in his praise, and says, "Cyprian's works are radiant as the sun." They are

**His style.**

not, however, free from faults. He employed Scripture in too loose and fanciful a manner, making unimportant particulars bear the most precise and weighty meanings. No meaning seems to be too strained. He makes, for example, the deluge a type of baptism; Melchizedek's bringing of bread and wine to Abraham is a symbol of the Lord's Supper; the four streams of paradise are the four gospels, etc. While, as a general rule, he speaks in noble language, yet he is often florid and fantastic. The ethical and ecclesiastical mostly predominate over the spiritual. Obedience to the priesthood, the praise of martyrdom, the supreme virtue of virginity, are his favorite themes. One of his most eloquent discourses was upon death (*de mortalitate*), preached in the period of a great pestilence. It abounds in vigorous language. "He who fights under God

**Specimen  
of his style.**

(*qui Deo militat*), and as a soldier in the heavenly camp, already has conceived a godlike hope, and must be prepared to meet the tempest of this worldly life fearlessly. For with provident voice (*providæ vocis*) has the Saviour foretold whatever shall come to pass. For the instruction of his people he has plainly taught them that they must endure war, hunger, earthquake, and pestilence. And that these vanishing things may not too greatly disturb us he has predicted that these afflictions should more and more increase in the last days. Behold how the Lord has foretold what has even now come to pass. And he has said (Luke 21), 'But when ye see these things, know that the kingdom of God is near at hand.'

Beloved, the kingdom of God is near at hand. Already the passing away of this world, the recompense and the joy of everlasting life, and the possession of the early-lost paradise, are nigh; already heavenly things succeed earthly, great things small, eternal temporal. Where is there reason for anguish and fear? Who that does not fail in all hope and all faith can be sorrowful and trembling under such circumstances? He alone should fear death who will not come to Christ; for he who comes to Christ hopes also to reign with him.”<sup>1</sup>

Eusebius of Cæsarea strove after elegance and splendor of diction, and lacked plainness and practical directness.

**Athanasius.** Athanasius was “the practical informing mind of the first half of the fourth century.”

He was a man of most commanding personality, indomitable will, and remarkable power over other minds. We

**Theologian rather than preacher.** think of him rather as a church leader, a dialectician and a theologian than as a preacher. Though a terrible fighter, he

showed Christian generosity at the death of his arch-foe Arius, and feared lest he might seem to triumph over the death of his adversary. “Death,” he said, “is the common lot of all men. We should never exult over the death of any man, even though he be our bitter enemy, since no one can know but that before the day is done the same fate may be his own.” He was an acute reasoner, and combined a keen logical power with a fiery zeal, not unmixed with earthly passion. As a preacher he was didactic rather than expository. His life, however, was too stormy and broken to admit of his sustaining the work of a steady instructor or preacher of God’s word.

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<sup>1</sup> Paniel’s “Gesch.,” p. 234.



Ephraem the Syrian was one of the greatest though most peculiar preachers of his times. His rich poetic nature was highly cultivated by all the rhetorical methods of the age, and his more than Oriental imagination was brought by monastic discipline into a state of the keenest sharpness, so that he had an almost prophetic penetration into spiritual things, and the power of bodying them forth with vividness, which won for him the names of the "Syrian prophet," "harp of the Holy Ghost."

**Ephraem  
the Syrian.**

We will now dwell a little longer on three or four other preachers, more profitable for our consideration in a homiletical view. Basil, Bishop and Archbishop of Cæsarea, called the Great, was born between 329 and 331, and died in 379, hardly fifty years old. He was of illustrious parentage. Gregory of Nyssa and Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, were his brothers. He was also an intimate friend of Gregory Nazianzen, with whom he studied in Cæsarea in Cappadocia. He early became distinguished for learning and piety. He studied philosophy and rhetoric at Antioch with the heathen teacher Libanius, and finished his classical education at Athens. "In the Greek Church it was the practice, as we may see in the examples of Basil and of Gregory Nazianzen, for such young men as were destined, by the wish of their families, to consecrate themselves to the service of the Church, to visit the schools of general education, then flourishing at Athens, Alexandria, Constantinople, Cæsarea in Cappadocia, and Cæsarea in Palestine. Next they passed some time in pursuing the study of ancient literature, either with particular reference to their own improvement or as rhetorical teachers in their native towns, until, by the course of their own meditations or by some impression

**Basil  
the Great.**

from without, a new direction of more decided Christian seriousness was given to their life. In this case it now became their settled plan to consecrate their entire life to the service of the faith and of the Church ; whether it was that they entered immediately into some one of the subordinate grades of the spiritual order, or that they preferred, in the first place, in silent retirement, by sober collection of thought, by the study of the Holy Scriptures, and of the older church fathers, either in solitude or in some society of monks, to prepare themselves for the spiritual office. That previous discipline in general literature had, in one respect, a beneficial influence, inasmuch as it gave a scientific direction to their minds in theology, and thus fitted them also for more eminent usefulness as church-teachers ; as becomes evident when we compare the bishops thus educated with others. But, on the other hand, the habits of style thus contracted, the vanity and fondness for display which were nourished in these rhetorical schools, had on many an influence unfavorable to the simplicity of the gospel, as may be seen, for example, after a manner not to be mistaken, in the case of Gregory of Nazianzus.”<sup>1</sup>

In a journey through the East Basil became disgusted with the Christless lives of the monks, and he himself was led to found a Cœnobite order of monks. At the death of Eusebius, in 370, he was chosen Bishop of Cæsarea. He labored for the orthodox faith with the zeal of an Athanasius. His character was steadfast and strong, as is seen in his intrepid resistance of the persecution of Valens ; and he was also earnest in Christian discipline and morality. He had at the same

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<sup>1</sup> Neander's " Ch. Hist.," v. ii. p. 150.

time great moderation, and by his mingled firmness and tact successfully resisted the persecution of Valens and the Arians. He was a hard worker in a hard field.

As a preacher he had received every aid from the highest culture of the time, and was, above all, inspired by an uncommon zeal for the truth, which he

derived from his mother. His contempora-

**His culture.**

ries speak of his eloquence in unmeasured terms of praise, and the homilies he left behind partially bear this out. His nine homilies on the "Six Days of Creation" (*Hexæmeron*) are the most renowned. There are also thirteen discourses on the Psalms, twenty-four sermons on moral subjects, and four martyr eulogies. The homilies are practical, animated, and searching. He

**Style.**

studied human nature, and was a sagacious master of the human heart. He almost always preached from a text, either one independently chosen or one that formed the scriptural lesson that was read in the public service, which last was Origen's method, and that of nearly all the preachers of those centuries. In regard to this interesting point of reading the Bible in the churches, Neander remarks: "As to those kept from studying the Scriptures themselves (chiefly by poverty, which prevented the purchase of MSS.), the reading of the Scriptures in the church was to serve as a remedy for the want; for on those occasions not single passages merely, but entire sections and whole books of the Bible were read in connection. Hence many who could not even read were able, by a constant attendance upon church, and by carefully listening to the portions read each year, to treasure up in their memories a familiar knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Neander's "Ch. Hist.," v. ii. p. 282.

Neander also says : " Chrysostom frequently, both in private conversation and his public discourses, exhorted his hearers not to rest satisfied with that which they heard read from the Scriptures within church, but to read them also with their families at home ; for what food was for the body, such the Holy Scriptures were for the soul—the source whence it derived substantial strength. To induce his hearers to study the Scriptures, he was often accustomed, when there was yet no set lesson of the sacred word prescribed for every Sunday, to give out for some time beforehand the text which he designed to make a subject of discourse on some particular occasion, and to exhort them, in order that they might be the better prepared for his remarks, in the mean time to reflect upon it themselves." <sup>1</sup>

Basil spoke also on definite themes, among which sermons are those upon Anger and Drunkenness. The last are powerful temperance sermons for any time. The length of those homilies is moderate. He evidently was an extempore preacher, as is proved by many internal evidences, although the general style of his discourses shows considerable method and careful finish. But he often breaks his train of thought as a new impulse comes upon him. He says in one place that he did not finish the sermon the day before, and will begin where he left off. He is not so spiritual and lofty in style as Ephraem the Syrian, but more solid and practical. He speaks like a thoroughly educated, observing, and thoughtful man, on human life, its dangers, temptations, sorrows, sins, and spiritual redemption. His style is excellent, without affectation, simple, clear, and in good taste. He had a

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<sup>1</sup> Neander's " Ch. Hist.," v. ii. p. 282.



quick intuition, and spoke with directness to the conscience. Basil, with the two Gregories, present us perhaps the first instances of polished and thoroughly trained classical orators in the pulpit. They have the merits and faults of such. They are too ornamental and elaborate, Basil, however, the least so of the three. They all give the impression that, though good and earnest men, they sought to be orators, which ambition the former preachers, even such men as Origen and Hippolytus, did not seem to have, and which the greater preachers who came after them, Chrysostom and Augustine, did not apparently have, or to such a marked extent. Basil was the most solid sermonizer of the three; but even in his discourses the glitter of false ornament and sentimentality are seen. In the sermons of Basil there is to be found much of the science of his day, especially in the sermons upon Creation. They are in fact scientific treatises on "Nature" and "Providence," comprehending essentially many of the questions now discussed in regard to the relation of science and religion, and are composed in a grave and stately style. His ethical discourses, however, are pungent and faithful, and, supported as they were by a life of stern piety, they had powerful influence in their day.<sup>1</sup>

**Basil  
and the  
Gregories,  
classical  
orators.**

Gregory Nazianzen, was commonly called "the Theologian"—*Ο Θεολογος*, because *Θεολογία*, in the stricter sense, was the term applied to the doctrine of Christ's divinity as contradistinguished from *οικονομία*, the doctrine of his incarnation.<sup>2</sup> In fact, with this father and with others of his

**Gregory  
Nazianzen.**

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 464; see also Moule's "Chr. Or.," p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Neander's "Ch. Hist.," v. ii. p. 415.

day, dogmatic truth is carefully distinguished from the province of morals. They were strictly theologians. This highly-praised champion of the Nicene confession, the intimate friend of Basil the renowned preacher, was born about the year 330, in an obscure town of Capadocia, though of wealthy and influential parentage, his father being a bishop. He studied first in Cæsarea with

**His** his friend Basil, under the rhetorician The-  
**philosophical** picus. His philosophical tendency, his  
**tendency.** love of Plato, his admiration for Origen, and above all his intense reverence for Athanasius, led him to Alexandria. After remaining there for a while he travelled to Athens, where he completed his classical studies, and seemed, while in Athens, to have no higher ambition than to be considered an accomplished rhetorician and sophist. Afterward he pursued exegetical and theological studies more diligently, and was made bishop of the small city of Sosima by Basil, who had been previously elevated to the see of Cæsarea. This call to so insignificant a place caused him great discontent. Though a good man and a great man, he had weak points.

While gifted with extraordinary oratorical powers, his  
**Style.** style as a preacher was built upon the elaborate and false rhetorical system of the Greek sophists. Five theological discourses, in which he defended the doctrine of the Trinity, and which exhibit considerable dialectical acuteness, gained for him the title (to which reference has been made) of Theologian ; and there is no doubt that Gregory's preaching contributed largely to the victory of the orthodox faith over Arianism, while his method of viewing doctrine had a marked influence upon the creed of the whole Catholic Church. One of his noblest pulpit efforts was his " Farewell Sermon," preached in the Church of St. Sophia, which re-

sulted in the triumph of the orthodox faith in Constantinople. His oratory, though more brilliant, had not the solidity and grasp upon the conscience that Basil's preaching had. It was philosophical and dialectical, and these qualities were strongly pronounced, and did not entirely harmonize with the higher qualities of preaching. He was also, as has been said, greatly inclined to ornament.

He was captivated by the style of the Greek orators, and, unfortunately, of Isocrates, and the later and more florid school of the Greek panegyrists. His sermons, as a general rule, have no definite text, and have long oratorical

**Followed the  
florid Greek  
orators.**

exordiums. They abound in repetitions, exclamations, interrogations, antitheses, and artificially constructed sentences. But among these flowery sacred orations there was much that was practical, vigorous, truly eloquent, and even at times profound. His sermon on "Love to the Poor," is one of his best and simplest homilies. He indulged often in unwarrantable sarcasm, and indeed his spirit had much of mundane bitterness and unsatisfied ambition; but mingled with these were loftier and nobler qualities. He had rare intelligence in doctrinal truth—the fine theologic sense (*Theologische Geist*). Neander says: "It is also the merit of Gregory that he did not, like other church-teachers of this period, who had been drawn into the field of controversy, forget, in his zeal for those views of doctrine which he found to be correct, that the essence of Christianity does not consist in speculative notions, but in the life; that he did not suffer himself to be misled by an exclusive zeal for orthodoxy of conceptions to neglect practical Christianity. Much rather did he make it a matter of special concern to combat that exclusively prevailing tendency to speculation in religion which leads to the injury of a living, active

Christianity—a tendency which was so very agreeable to the mass of worldly men, because it made it easy for them to put on the appearance of zeal for piety and orthodoxy, and to deceive the judgment of others, and in part also their own conscience, while they spared themselves from the contest with sin in their own hearts and in the world without them. He often declared strongly against the delusive notion that all manner of frivolity might be united with zeal for sound doctrine, and often presented before his hearers, with pointed earnestness, the truth that without a holy sense of divine things men could have no understanding of them; that sacred matters must be treated in a sacred manner. He often preached against the perverse manner of those who looked upon discussions upon divine things as any other conversation (*ὡσπερ τὰ ἱππικὰ καὶ θέατρα, οὕτω καὶ τὰ θεία παύζειν*) on topics of ordinary discourse, and often declared that the full and perfect knowledge of divine things was not the end of the present earthly life, but that its end was “by becoming holy, to become capable of the full intuition of the life eternal.”<sup>1</sup>

These noble thoughts and apprehensions were, however, mingled with much of the vanity of learning and the love of oratorical display. His panegyrical sermons, or rather orations, are full of the most unqualified and extravagant adulation, especially the oration upon Athanasius. Thus he says: “In praising Athanasius I praise virtue itself. He is the whole of virtue incarnate, for he combined in himself all possible virtues.” While he often shone as a midday sun in the brilliancy of his eloquence, his preaching was never without spots and faults. His language often degenerated into the emptiest declamation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Neander's “Eccl. Hist.,” v. ii. p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> Paniel's “Gesch.,” p. 493.



Gregory of Nyssa, the younger brother of Basil of Cæsarea, was born between 330 and 340, and died about 369. He was made Bishop of Nyssa by his brother Basil. In his youth he showed fire as a theological athlete, as a champion of the orthodox faith, but his disposition was naturally mild. Under the Arian Valens he was driven from his bishopric, but returned under Jovian. He was greatly honored as a ready preacher, drawing often large multitudes to hear him. He was also highly cultivated in the learning of the time, and, like Gregory Nazianzen, was built too much upon Greek ideas of rhetoric and philosophy. He carried his Greek training into his homiletical studies. He was in fact a teacher of rhetoric for a time, as were many of the most distinguished Christian fathers. Although inclined to speculative thinking, he spoke with directness and power on the theme of Christian morals and Christian life. Here he was calm, simple, orderly, and clear. He had great influence in the ecclesiastical councils of the time of Theodosius. As an interpreter of the Scriptures, he considered with Origen the allegorical interpretation to be not only right but essential, and carried it to a fine-spun extreme; yet he held firmly to the principle that "one must go to the Scriptures for everything that is really profitable." His sermons upon "Solomon's Song," "The Book of Ecclesiastes," "The Psalms," "The Lord's Prayer," "The Sermon on the Mount," "The Paschal Feast," "The Woman taken in Adultery," and the funeral orations upon the Princess Paulina, Ephraem the Syrian, and his own brother Basil, are among his most renowned discourses.<sup>1</sup>

**Gregory of  
Nyssa.**

**Rhetorical  
culture.**

**A prac-  
tical  
preacher.**

<sup>1</sup> Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 520.

Not to dwell upon many illustrious preachers whom it would be profitable to notice, such as Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium; Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis; Theodorus, Bishop of Mopsuestia, we will finish this account of the preachers of the early patristic period by a notice of two of the greatest of them—Chrysostom and Augustine.

John, surnamed Chrysostom the Golden-mouthed—a name applied to him some time after his death, and, as it is supposed, by the sixth Œcumenical Council in 680—was born at Antioch, as most authorities state, in 354, although Neander and Milman say in 347, and was baptized by Bishop Meletius. He grew up a serious, lovable youth, under the care of his widowed mother Anthusa, and, as Neander remarks, passing through none of those wild, dark struggles with temptation which left an ineffaceable impression on the soul of Augustine and gave a gloomy coloring to his theology. He lived during his early manhood near Antioch, and led an ascetic life, in which period he is said to have learned the Bible by heart—probably an exaggeration, but founded on his intense study of the Scriptures. He was appointed deacon, and commenced preaching. He was ordained priest by Flavian, Meletius's successor. In the outbreak at Antioch in which the imperial statues were thrown down, Chrysostom preached with great boldness and effect. His pulpit eloquence caused him to be transferred to the archiepiscopal see of Constantinople in 397. He restricted the episcopal expenditure in which his predecessors had indulged, and by his benefactions acquired the name of "John the Almoner." He deposed thirteen bishops of Lydia and Syria for abuse of office, and went to Antioch to reform the church there. During his absence the faction opposed

to him gained ground. He refused to submit to the "Council of the Oak" at Chalcedon, and was exiled to Nicæa in 403. An insurrection forced his recall two days afterward. He continued to preach with increasing plainness till, through the influence of the Empress Eudoxia, he was banished to Cucusus in Mount Taurus, and afterward, for greater security, to Pityus on the Euxine. On the road to that place, about nine miles from Comana, in Pontus, he died, through weariness and ill-treatment, September 14th, 407. In his wanderings and residence among the savage mountaineers of the Taurus he discovered the zeal of the true missionary, endeavoring to convert the Persians and the Goths with whom he came in contact. In his celebrated letters to Olympias from his place of banishment occurs the sentence, "None can hurt the man who will not hurt himself." He died exclaiming, "Glory be to God in all things! Amen!" He is said to have been, like the apostle Paul, small of stature, with a large, bald head, hollow cheeks, and deep-sunken eyes. The best life of him is that by Neander, one volume only of which has been translated into English.

Though one of the greatest of commentators and theologians, he was eminently and distinctively a preacher.

That was his enthusiasm and his life. He was as much like the apostle Paul in this respect as one man of a different age and culture could resemble another. His homilies that have been preserved are numerous (said to be over 600), though many extant are of doubtful authenticity. They are in many respects more valuable than the sermons of any of the fathers, Augustine not excepted. All patristical literature, as we have before remarked, with the exception of the works of Chrysostom and Augustine, might be destroyed, and, we might

Number  
and range  
of his  
homilies.

almost say, all would be saved. It is quite difficult to determine the exact date of Chrysostom's sermons. The number, variety, and range of these discourses may be seen by mentioning the topics of some of them. Twelve homilies are upon the Incomprehensible Nature of God ; eight against the Jews and heathen, to prove that " Christ is God ;" seven upon Lazarus ; twenty-one upon Idol Statues, addressed to the people of Antioch ; nine upon Repentance ; seven in eulogy of the apostle Paul ; and twenty-five upon the saints and martyrs ; thirty-four principally upon certain passages in the New Testament (most of these homilies on the New Testament have been translated and published in the " Library of the Fathers" ) ; sixty-seven upon Genesis ; sixty upon the Psalms ; six upon Isaiah ; ninety-one upon Matthew, of which Thomas Aquinas said " that he would not give them in exchange for the whole city of Paris ;" eighty-seven upon John ; twenty-five upon the Acts ; thirty-two upon Romans ; forty-four upon the First Epistle to the Corinthians ; thirty upon the Second ; twenty-four upon the Epistle to the Ephesians ; fifteen upon Philipians ; twelve upon Colossians ; eleven upon the First and five upon the Second Book of Thessalonians ; eighteen upon the First, and ten upon the Second Epistle to Timothy ; six upon the Epistle to Titus, and three upon that to Philemon ; thirty-four upon the Epistle to the Hebrews ;<sup>1</sup> a great number upon special texts and occasions, the most interesting of which, historically, are those that belong to the time of the first and second exiles.<sup>2</sup> His most eloquent sermons, or those esteemed

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<sup>1</sup> A beautiful edition of the Homilies of the Pauline Epistles in Greek (but without the Latin version), has been published in connection with the Oxford Library of the Fathers.

<sup>2</sup> Paniel's " Gesch.," p. 609.



so, are upon Lazarus, upon Images, or "The Statues," upon Repentance, upon the History of Saul and David, upon the Gospel of Matthew, upon the Parable of the Debtor, upon the Forgiveness of Enemies, upon Almsgiving, and upon Future Blessedness. It may be seen that most of these discourses were exegetical and expository, being running commentaries upon the Scriptures; and, in fact, Chrysostom aimed to explain the entire word of God to the people, following it book by book, text by text. It is said that he actually did this in the course of his ministry, although the greater part of his exegetical homilies are now lost. We would call attention to this fact, that he was, above all, a biblical preacher, and in him we would find one of the noblest illustrations of this method of preaching. Neander says: "The tendency of the Antiochan school is seen in its more moderate form, and deeply pervaded by the Christianity of the heart, in the case of two individuals, both of whom present models of biblical interpretation for the period in which they lived, while one of them furnished the best pattern of a fruitful homiletical application of the Sacred Scriptures; these were Theodoret and Chrysostom. The example of the latter shows particularly the great advantage of this exegetical tendency, when accompanied by a deep and hearty feeling, and a life enriched by inward Christian experience, to any one who would cultivate a talent for homiletical exposition, and indeed for the whole office of the preacher."<sup>1</sup>

Mostly  
exegetical  
and  
expository.

Chrysostom early adopted the intelligent Christian mode of interpretation pursued in the school of Antioch; being, in opposition to the allegorical method of Origen

<sup>1</sup> Neander's "Ch. Hist.," v. ii. p. 353.

and the Alexandrian school and its bold rationalizing spirit, an investigation of the simple exegesis of words as they stand in the Scriptures, an examination of the historic circumstances of the original writers and speakers, and a more careful distinguishing of the divine element from the human. Whatever of philosophy was introduced was Aristotelean.<sup>1</sup>

Neander says again: "Through a rich inward experience he lived into the understanding of the Holy Scriptures ; and a prudent method of interpretation, on logical and grammatical principles, kept him in the right track in deriving the spirit from the letter of the sacred volume. His profound and simple, yet fruitful, homiletical method of treating the Scriptures shows to what extent he was indebted to both, and how, in his case, both co-operated together."<sup>2</sup>

Chrysostom, as has been said, was eminently an exegetical preacher, making, as did Origen and all the great preachers of his time, the interpretation of the word—the severe and yet prayerful exposition of the Scriptures—the basis of all his argument and exhortation, thus elevating the gospel above philosophy, above theology, and having the evangelic spirit running through his preaching—the spirit that comes from Christ through his word. At the same time, though so markedly a biblical preacher, Chrysostom was not a bibliolater. He recognized the human element in errors and contradictions, and did not attempt to explain these in a forced way. He did not make salvation depend on the letter of Scripture, and he thought that it would be better to have no Bible at all if the grace of God were written upon the heart in all the fulness of an inward spiritual revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> See Hase's "Ch. Hist.," p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Neander's "Ch. Hist.," v. ii. p. 693.

One might spend years and even a lifetime in studying these expository discourses, which contain every quality of style and eloquence.

As to his native qualities as an orator, Chrysostom was gifted with splendid talents, and with an ardent vitality, a bold, incisive intellect, a pungent wit, a graphic power of the imagination, a fiery temper, which, though controlled, is, after all, a source of power with the people, and a profound original genius.

**His  
native  
oratorical  
gifts.**

He had, too, the training of the most distinguished rhetorician of his day, Libanius of Antioch, who was also the teacher of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen. "By the study

**His culture.**

of the ancients he secured to himself the advantages of a harmonious mental and rhetorical culture, which in his case was ennobled by the divine principle of life drawn from the gospel. A heart full of the love which flows from faith gave to his native eloquence, cultivated by the study of the ancients, its animating charm."<sup>1</sup> As far as he could imitate any one, he built himself as a preacher upon the apostle Paul; and he had the same ministerial zeal, the same love of souls, burning in him. He said: "It is the firm resolve of my soul, as long as I breathe, and as long as it pleaseth God to continue me in this present life, to perform this service, whether I am listened to or not, to do that which the Lord hath commanded me." "He complemented the sober clearness of the Antiochan exegesis and the rhetorical arts of Libanius with the depth of his warm Christian heart, and he carried out in his own life, as far as mortal man can do it, the ideal of the priesthood which, in youthful enthusiasm, he once described."<sup>2</sup> The moral element of Christianity entered

<sup>1</sup> Neander, v. ii. p. 693.

<sup>2</sup> Hase's "Ch. Hist.," p. 121.

also largely into his preaching, and he sought, above all, to impress the practical truths of religion, and to gain influence over men for their spiritual welfare. He preached a vital Christianity, not a formal orthodoxy. His whole life and ministry indeed were a protest against unbelief. He contended, with a boldness and vigor unsurpassed, against the gigantic corruptions of the waning Roman empire. He preached on works as well as on faith, dwelling constantly upon the Christian life, pouring out the treasures of his heart upon the loveliness of the image of Christ in the believer's character, and striving to build up this inward Christlike life in the hearts of his hearers. "In him we find a most complete mutual interpenetration of theoretical and practical theology, as well as of the dogmatical and ethical elements, exhibited mainly in the fusion of the exegetical and homiletical. Hence his exegesis was guarded against barren philology and dogma, and his pulpit discourse was free from doctrinal abstraction and empty rhetoric. The introduction of the knowledge of Christianity from the sources into the practical life of the people left him little time for the development of special

**The  
moral  
element  
in his  
preaching.**

dogmas." Yet he was not wanting in the dogmatic element. He discoursed much on the nature and being of God, on special providence, on sin, on the Church as God's

**The  
dogmatic  
element.**

spiritual temple, on the resurrection, and on future punishments; and, as a general rule, with remarkable liberality of sentiment for his age. On the subject of everlasting punishments, his lofty moral code, and the exces-

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<sup>1</sup> Niedner's "Lehrbuch der Christlichen Kirchen Geschichte," p. 303. Berlin, 1861.



sively corrupt state of the times and of the Church, led him to a more marked sternness and positiveness of view than even that of Augustine, and certainly of Origen. He was, on this side of his preaching, overpowering in his earnestness. "It was the conscience of man, not his opinions, that he addressed;" but the technicalities of theology he eschewed, and gave only the rich fruit of noble doctrine. He had deep insight into the human heart, and understood men of all classes and characters. He was a fearless and terrible rebuker of sin in high places, and when it was a perilous thing to attack vice clothed with imperial arbitrary power, he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, speaking often with great severity of personal and popular sins, and of God's righteous judgments upon them. There was no mealy-mouthed popularity in his preaching. With cheerful courage he held up the light of a pure faith in the midst of the darkness of an impure age. Although more ornate in style than would suit occidental taste, yet from contemporary testimony, and from the testimony of the sermons

#### His style.

that we have, his preaching, which made the dome of St. Sophia ring with its rhythmical periods, was characterized by an eloquence as vigorous, direct, and vehement as, but far more copious than, that of Demosthenes, so rich was it in the play of the imagination, and at times so tender, moving, and pathetic. He had the feeling of the true Christian preacher of the Pauline stamp, without which feeling no one can be a great and apostolic preacher. His discourses, like those of Augustine, rise sometimes into high devotional flights, into "that ampler ether and diviner air" where the incomprehensible nature of God occupies all his thoughts, and the human audience is for a time lost sight of; but, as a general rule, the practical, the pastoral, the missionary

element prevails in them—that of the shepherd of souls, of the leader and guardian of the Church of God. His preaching, as might be said of Luther's, was his life—it was an epitome of his character, of his soul-struggles, of his spiritual history. He glories in the work of preaching the gospel to the poor. He seems to revel in the richness of its divine scope and range. He varied his style of preaching—now using homely and familiar language ; at another time stirring, splendid, and energetic language ; and at another time metaphysical and abstruse ; for, he said, the table of the gospel feast should be covered with various dishes, and the banquet should be like the divine generosity of the Giver. One might say of him and his style of preaching that, while he employed all the varied sources of power to be derived from human training, he was, above all, trained in the school of the Holy Ghost, and was made a wonderfully skillful instrument in the hands of the divine Master.

While he elevated the gospel above philosophy, having the true evangelic spirit running like a clear stream through his preaching, still there is philosophy in his preaching ; he appeals to general recognition of principles, and wields the whole truth with doctrine of power in its particular applications. While, free-will. perhaps, to be classed with the school of Antioch in his careful and conscientious interpretation, he yet had much of the free spirit of the Alexandrian school of theologians, whose works he deeply studied. He belonged to the polemic and apologetic age of the Church, and was thus led, in his life of mental and spiritual strife, in opposition to the false philosophies of the age, to meditate upon and to bring out the profounder harmonies of truth ; but he was such a loyal, practical, pointed scriptural preacher, of the true apostolic stamp, that he awoke

a deadly opposition in the corrupt circle of the demoralized Greek Church, which finally destroyed him. The style of his sermonizing, undoubtedly, was oratorical or rhetorical, but his preaching was rhetoric in its best sense, being the persuasive communication of truth. As has been more than once remarked, he followed out with bold earnestness the problem of the freedom of the will and its moral self-determination, which is the foundation or condition of virtue. "He was so zealous for morality that he must have considered it a point of special importance to deprive men of every ground of excuse for the neglect of moral efforts. His practical sphere of labor in the cities of Antioch and Constantinople gave a still greater impulse to this tendency. For in these large capitals he met with many who sought to attribute their want of Christian activity to the defects of human nature, and the power of Satan or of fate."<sup>1</sup> But it must be said that he urged quite as strongly on the other side the existence and power of depravity in opposition to a false moral and intellectual pride. But there is wrought into his sermons a vast amount of practical teaching upon virtue and moral subjects, some of which was derived from his study of the Stoical philosophy, of which he was fond, but chiefly from the word, example, and spirit of Christ.

His sermons at Antioch were more elaborate than those preached at Constantinople. He composed his sermons with care, preparing himself by thorough study, as well as by meditation and prayer. As an exegete he did not possess a good knowledge of Hebrew, and he drew from the faulty Greek translations. From his

**Composition  
and form of  
sermons.**

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<sup>1</sup> Neander's "Ch. Hist.," v. ii. p. 658.

habit of expository preaching, all his discourses do not have an elaborate method or plan, and they are often desultory and diffuse ; but they are pervaded by an earnest aim, by the desire to build up the Church of Christ, to reform its corruptions, to vindicate the gospel against heathen philosophy, and to pluck souls from the depths of sin and unbelief in which they were sunk. Sometimes he preaches on a definite subject or proposition, as we shall notice in a moment, dwelling upon it pertinaciously, and with something of the strict order of a classical discourse ; but as a general rule he is more free, and speaks the thought to which the Scriptures or the occasion gives rise. He was an extemporaneous preacher in the best sense of the term, having his faculties in command, and being able to speak solidly and thoroughly upon the subject presented at the moment. His sermons, like most of those previously to his time, were rather simply *λόγοι* (addresses, spoken words, upon the scriptural lesson) than *ὁμιλῖαι*, or set discourses. Some sixty-two of his sermons are, however, regularly constructed discourses upon isolated texts of Scripture.

He was probably a preacher of short sermons, for he says of himself, that the art of limiting himself to a small compass in his sermons, and of exhausting a subject, was one of his principal endowments. His plan seems to have been, although he introduced a great deal of extraneous matter with frequent divergences into different themes, to preach briefly, pointedly, and frequently on the same subject till he had made an impression, and driven that particular lesson firmly into the minds of his hearers. He says : “ For this seems to me the best mode of instruction, to insist on a particular subject till we see our counsel taking effect. For he who discourses to-day on almsgiving, to-morrow on prayer, the next day on



kindness, and the following day on humility, will really be able to set his hearers right in no one of these things, passing so rapidly from this subject to that, and from that to another; but he who would really reform his hearers in any particular should not cease his admonitions and exhortations respecting it, nor pass to another subject till he discover his former admonitions well rooted in them.<sup>1</sup>

He was, in the best sense of the term, a popular preacher, gaining this distinction by his plainness, clearness, directness, and, more than all, by his abundant, lively, often homely, method of illustration. His illustrations may be

**A popular  
preacher.**

studied at this day for their freshness, vivacity, and illuminating quality. He knew how to come down to the level of the popular mind. The people were often completely carried away by his eloquence, and acted like drunken persons; they pressed up to the pulpit where he spoke, so as not to lose a single word; they said, when he was about to be banished, "Better that the sun should cease to shine than that our Chrysostom's mouth should be stopped;" even the cold Gibbon praises his golden eloquence, and another has said, "his tongue flowed like the stream of the Nile."

On the whole, to conclude this sketch, we would characterize this great preacher as one in all respects the best model for our imitation—one to be the most carefully studied, and as far as practicable followed—since the days of the inspired preachers; for he was built morally and spiritually, by nature, culture, and grace, upon an apostolic and divine plan. While a man of vast mind, he was, according to Pascal's classification of

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<sup>1</sup> "Bib. Sacra," v. iv. p. 625.

preachers, a preacher who belonged to the order of love rather than to the order of intellect. Eloquent beyond his age, and almost every age, the apostolic earnestness of his character as a preacher makes even the genius of the man seem secondary ; and compared with Gregory Nazianzen and most of the great preachers of his period, in whom the philosophic and rhetorical elements predominated, he was Pauline in his bare, towering, sublime spirituality. He, like Paul, could boast of his gifts, but he counted all as nothing, less than nothing, that he might win Christ, and win the world to Christ.

In addition to his homiletical and exegetical works, Chrysostom wrote a most valuable treatise on the priesthood, *Περὶ ἱεροσύνης*, which contains valuable hints on the preaching and pastoral office. "He requires of the priest, or minister, to be better than the monk and better than other men, as he has greater difficulties to contend with, and a greater fight to wage. He sets up as the highest object of the preacher the great principle stated by Paul, that in all his discourses he should seek to please God alone, not men. He must not, indeed, despise the approving demonstrations of men ; but as little must he count them, nor trouble himself when his hearers withhold them. Imperturbable comfort in his labors he finds only in the consciousness of having his discourse framed and wrought out to the approval of God." <sup>1</sup>

Without spending time upon the great preachers of the fourth and fifth centuries of the Western Church, such as Hilarius, Bishop of Pictavium, "the Athanasius of the

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<sup>1</sup> Schaff, v. ii. p. 253 ; see also Neander's "Life of Chrysostom ;" Paniel's "Gesch.," p. 590 *seq.* ; and Moule's "Oratory," pp. 140, 141, 145, 146, 152, 156, 157.

West ;" Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who was great in character, but who as an orator was " more successful by simplifying imitations of Greek models than by original eloquence ;" <sup>1</sup> and Jerome, who, though more of a writer and theologian than preacher, yet exerted a vast influence on the preaching and interpretation of his day, introducing Greek learning and Greek methods into the Western Church, we will conclude our account of this period by saying a few words upon Augustine as a preacher.

Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, was born at Tagaste, in Numidia, November 13th, 354. Like Chrysostom, he possessed the inestimable advantage of having a thoroughly Christian mother. Of Monica Neander says : " Whatever treasures of virtue and worth a life of faith, even of a soul not trained by scientific culture, can bestow, was set before him in the example of his pious mother." Of a passionate nature, and full of the consciousness of power, he plunged not only into the brilliant though false intellectual life, but also the vicious excesses of the luxurious city of Carthage. The reading of Cicero's Hortensius, revealing the dignity of philosophical pursuits, is said to have been the first good influence upon his mind, turning him from an openly immoral career. To quote Neander, " The conflict now began in his soul which lasted through eleven years of his life. As the simplicity of the Holy Scriptures possessed no attraction to his taste—a taste formed by rhetorical studies and the artificial discipline of the declamatory schools—especially as his mind was now in the same tone and direction

**Hilarius, Ambrose,  
Jerome.**

**Augustine.**

<sup>1</sup> Hase, " Hist. of Chr. Ch.," p. 118.

with that of the Emperor Julian, when the latter was conducted to the Platonic theosophy ; as, moreover, he found so many things in the doctrines of the Church which, from want of inward experience, could not be otherwise than unintelligible to him, while he attempted to grasp, by the understanding from without, what could be understood only by the inner life, from the feeling of inward want, and one's own inward experience ; so, under these circumstances, the delusive pretensions of the Manichæan sect, which, instead of a blind belief on authority, held out the promise of clear knowledge and a satisfactory solution of all questions relating to things human and divine, presented the stronger attractions to his inexperienced youth." While then an instructor in rhetoric at Carthage, he threw himself with his accustomed impetuosity into the Manichæan heresy. He wrote about that time a book on æsthetics (*De Apto et Pulchro*), which has been lost. After wasting some ten years in the barren Manichæan philosophy he went to Rome, and then to Milan. Through the preaching of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and, above all, the prayers and tears of his mother, he became a Christian in 386. He returned to Africa, was ordained presbyter, then bishop-coadjutor, then Bishop of Hippo (*Hippo-Regius*), on the Numidian coast of North Africa, in 396. He carried on his great contest with Pelagius, with which the world rang ; but his succeeding history, as a church father and theologian, is a familiar one, and we merely add the date of his death—August 28th, 430, at the age of 76.

We will not speak of him as a theologian, though coming, as Milman says, just at the right time, and representing the thought of the age, as going through Manichæism and Platonism into pure Christianity ; but



it is only as a preacher that we now have to do with him. Great as he was as a theologian, whose theology Luther moulded into Protestantism, and Jansenius into Roman Catholicism, yet next after Origen and Chrysostom he had the deepest influence upon homiletical studies and preaching of almost any man.

He himself produced a great number of homiletical works, both as a writer and sermonizer. A large number of his homilies, probably by means of short-hand reporters, have come down to us fresh, sharp-cut, full of life and vigor, as if preached yesterday.

**Influence  
on  
preaching.**

As the moral element was prominent in Chrysostom's preaching, so in Augustine's the doctrinal or dogmatic element predominated, and from his example it has entered and ruled in the Christian pulpit to this day. His mind was of a speculative and organizing, rather than practical order; but notwithstanding this tendency to philosophy, he did, like Chrysostom, preach to the popular heart, and was above oratorical vanity, or the ambition to be considered eloquent, though his sermons still show the effect of his rhetorical and philosophical training. His own experience gave him a profound knowledge of sin and of the corrupt heart, and even his doctrinal discussions were followed by a close application to his hearers' consciences. His main aim in preaching seemed to be to do good, and to draw men, by the agency of the preached word, to God.

**Dogmatic  
element  
predominant.**

Augustine was not, however, a faultless preacher. Many of his sermons, especially his doctrinal discourses, are jejune and barren; and one may sometimes search in them in vain for the barest scriptural or even moral truth.

**Not  
faultless.**

There is much also that is fanciful and excessively puerile : plays upon words, startling antitheses, odd conceits. There is often not the least systematic arrangement, and one wonders that a man of such extraordinary genius could have spoken such useless things. But these faults belonged to the age ; and he was too earnest a preacher, too strongly bent on winning men to Christ and doing God's work, to err greatly in this direction or any other.

Augustine spent most of his life in studying and teaching the art of oratory, and when he became a Christian he made a special application of his rhetorical studies to preaching. He wrote a treatise on sacred rhetoric, which is contained in the fourth book of his great work entitled " De Doctrinâ Christianâ."

As a writer  
on  
Homiletics.

In briefly and freely analyzing this treatise, its chief principles might be set forth under some twelve distinct heads :

(1.) The knowledge of rhetoric is a genuine science, highly useful to be pursued by the Christian preacher, and its principles should be acquired by him when young, or at the beginnings of his ministerial life ; and chiefly through the study and hearing of good models.

Main  
homiletical  
precepts.

(2.) As the preacher is a champion of the true faith and an opponent of error, he should use his first efforts to teach good and to unteach evil ; he may for this purpose employ every legitimate method of influencing men, and use different means and styles of persuasion—viz., conversation, historical illustration, argument, motives, open rebuke, animated exhortation.

(3.) It is better for the preacher to speak with true knowledge (*sapienter*) than with mere art (*eloquenter*) ;

and a man speaks with more or less of true knowledge as he makes greater or less advancement in the study of the Scriptures. This Scriptural knowledge may go a great way as a substitute for artistic eloquence ; but a union of biblical knowledge and artistic eloquence he considered highly desirable.

(4.) Plainness or perspicuity is the first great merit of the preacher ; and he thought that the obscure parts of even inspired Scripture were not to be imitated by the human teacher. Clearness rather than elaborateness should be aimed after ; and he says, in so many words, that the best preacher is he who provides that his hearer hear the truth, and that what he hears he understands. He held that the thought is to be preferred above the word, and that the true is better than the artistic.

(5.) Everything in preaching should be held subservient to *bending the hearer to action*. Didactic preaching should not waste itself in vain learning and argumentation, but should aim to bring to light what is hidden, and set it vividly before the minds and hearts of the hearers, however this be done ; for what is the use of a golden key, if it will not open, and what advantage has it to the wooden key that will open ?

(6.) Attractiveness or persuasiveness in preaching must, however, always be tempered,

(a) By sound doctrine ;

(b) By gravity.

He gives examples of the violation of the first rule in the false prophets, whose seductive, persuasive eloquence in falsehood brought dreadful ruin upon Israel ; and of the second rule in Cyprian, where even so great a father erred in speaking foolishly, and lost more than he gained by his mistimed liveliness.

(7.) It is by the Christian feeling of his sermons, more

than by any endowments of intellect, that the preacher must hope to inform the understandings, and catch the affections and bend the will of his hearers. If thus earnest, the Holy Spirit will come to his assistance. The Spirit is promised (Matt. 10 : 19) to those who for Christ were delivered over to persecution, and he will not withhold his aid from those who are heartily engaged in delivering Christ into the hands of learners. But nothing, he thought, was more unwise in itself, or more alien from the spirit and letter of the divine economy, than to suppose that the gifts of the Spirit justify us in relaxing our own efforts of preparation, whether intellectual or spiritual.

(8.) As to style in preaching, while the thought should be preferred above the word, precisely as the mind is preferred above the body, and while thus bearing in mind the prime importance of his subject-matter itself, he laid down the following distinctions of style to be observed by the preacher according to the several exigencies of application. Is he conveying instruction? he should use the simple and low style (*submissa dictio*). Is he bestowing praise or blame? the even and regulated style (*temperata dictio*). Is he rousing the sluggish or diseased will to a performance of duty? the lofty and impressive (*grande dicendi genus*).

Examples of all these styles are extracted from the writings of St. Paul. The low and quiet (*submissa dictio*) is illustrated from Gal. 4 : 21 ff., and 3 : 15 ff., in the first of which the Judaizing Galatians are met by an allegory; and in the second the redemption of the world through Christ is vindicated against the exclusive claims of the special covenant.

Several passages are brought forward in explanation of the even and regulated mode of speech (*temperata dictio*),



the chief of them being Rom. 12 : 1 ; 12 : 6 ; 13 : 6 ; 13 : 12.

The lofty and impressive style (*grande dicendi genus*) is nobly represented by 2 Cor. 6 : 2 ; Rom. 8 : 28 ff., and the chapter is brought to a close by an extract from Gal. 4 : 10 ff., which is characterized by Augustine as the one "lofty" passage in a production the general tone of which is "low and quiet," dismissed by the "even and regular" style at the beginning and end.

(9.) "A variety in style should be employed," or, he says, one style being made to relieve another. But, above all, care must be taken not to prolong the "lofty and impressive" style beyond judicious limits. The very strain upon the mind which eloquence involves, and upon which its effect depends, cannot be kept up.

The legitimate effect of the impressive style is not to draw down men's approbation, but to move their feelings. It is the tear and not the shout that forms its proper result. Augustine brings forward an instance of the effect of his own words in quelling a tumult in Mauritanian Cæsarea. The "low" is best in all cases of instruction, as of proof distinguished from active influence. But, at best, these styles are only imperfect means to an end ; and the end, or right persuasion, is all in all.

(10.) All styles of address are mutually interdependent. We should not separate them, nor think that one should be regarded as the sole instrument of mastering the understanding, another the affections, another the will.

(11.) More important than anything is the life of the preacher ; and no rules of art will ever have the least chance of supplying the void which must result from an unsoundness in that. He adds in another place that "ministers should avoid faults of conduct more than faults of oratory."

(12.) In conclusion, let not prayer be forgotten. Did Esther pray for an *εὐρυθμον λόγον*, when pleading for the temporal safety of her people? And shall we neglect to do the same when the eternal welfare of mankind is at stake?

Though profound as a theologian, and brilliant as a rhetorician and dialectician, Augustine as a preacher was uncommonly simple and direct. Niebuhr

**His style.** calls him eloquent, but it was the eloquence of simple, unaffected truth. Although so highly rhetorical in his other works, most of his sermons are so plain in their style and biblical and spiritual in their themes, that they could be preached with effect at this day; they have that freshness which springs from the central light and spirit of Christian truth. They are, however, full of the expression of devotional feeling; and the intense passion of his nature, turned after his conversion into devotional channels, bursts out and overflows in his discourses, which sometimes rise to the highest pitch of eloquence. There is in his discourses no rigidly logical plan—for he followed the rhetorical rather than logical order—his reasoning in this respect resembling that of Paul rather than that of Aristotle; but there is evident unity of aim, even if not strictly logical unity. While always drawn from some portion of the word of God, his sermons are not often built upon particular texts, and yet one text is usually prominently brought forward near the beginning of the homily, and this appears to be the main text around which other passages of Scripture are grouped, and about which the sermon itself revolves.

His favorite precept, that the general style of the preacher should be a low and plain one (*submissa dictio*), was strikingly exemplified in his own preaching.

Although his sermons, as has been said, rise to eloquent

flights, gaining for him the name of "the Christian Cicero," yet he was really too earnest to indulge in much rhetorical freedom. He had at times a kind of direct impassioned energy that was full of power.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine preached mostly in an extemporaneous manner, and with but slight immediate preparation; for his sermons appear to have been al-ways freely delivered, and he was occasion-ally directed to the choice of a subject by

**Extempo-  
raneous  
preacher.**

thoughts that sprang up during the course of sacred worship. He followed the ancient method of commenting upon the lesson of Scripture which had been read by the prælector in the public service. His manner of preaching is chiefly expository, going upon the principle of explaining from the pulpit as much of the Bible as possible. He deeply pondered the word of God, and drew his inspiration, his thought, his style, from this divine fountain. As an exegete, however, his discourses do not always show profound learning; for though well versed in the Latin language and literature, he has always had the reputation of being a poor Greek scholar, and he knew little or nothing of Hebrew. "Apparently he was in the habit of using translations of Plato (*Confess.* 8, 2); but, on the other hand, Greek words frequently occur in his writings, correctly rendered and discriminated; and he speaks, in one of his epistles to Marcellinus, of referring to the Greek psalter, and finding, in reference to certain difficulties, that it agreed with the Vulgate. Clausen, who has particularly investigated this point, sums up the evidence to this effect, that Augustine was "fairly instructed in Greek grammar, and a subtle distinguisher of words;" but that beyond this his knowledge was insuffi-

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<sup>1</sup> See Merivale's "Conversion of the Roman Empire," p. 78.

cient for a thorough comprehension of Greek books, and especially for those in the Hellenistic dialect.<sup>1</sup>”

The introduction of his sermon is commonly simple and artlessly attractive. He often goes on without developing any specific proposition or theme, and then as suddenly comes to an end, closing generally with the doxology, or with a short prayer. Indeed, as to that, the early preachers were in the habit of introducing short prayers in all stages of their sermons, as the Spirit moved them.

Augustine was an inexhaustibly fruitful preacher. “He often preached five times a day in succession, sometimes twice a day, and set it as the object of his preaching that all might live with him, and he with all, in Christ. Whenever he went into Africa he was begged to preach the word of salvation.”<sup>2</sup> His sermons and ecclesiastical orations that still remain to us number some five hundred and ninety; of these, one hundred and eighty-three are upon passages in the Old and New Testaments, eighty upon church festivals, sixty-nine upon saints and martyrs. They are, indeed, upon all subjects fitted for pulpit instruction, and exhibit immense range and variety of topics.

As a general thing, Augustine’s sermons are short, some of them probably not more than a quarter of an hour in length. In comparison with the endlessly long and ornate discourses of the Greek preachers, his brevity and simplicity are worthy of imitation. Although he frequently enlivened his discourses with historical illustrations, yet in metaphors and figures of speech he does not abound, or, when they do occur, they are not, while sometimes elegant and powerful, as a general rule, par-

<sup>1</sup> “*Encyclopædia Britannica*.”

<sup>2</sup> Schaff’s “*Ecc. Hist.*,” v. iii. p. 194.



ticularly felicitous. It seems as if his earnestness caused him to rise above rhetorical style, of which he was nevertheless a trained master. He trusted to the Spirit of God, and to the inbreathing of his heart-melting eloquence.<sup>1</sup> He preached to the many, not to the few. He preached in an animated and pungent manner, with an affectionate ardor, abounding in pointed interrogation and appeal. He emphasized the side of truth in which his deepest personal experience lay—viz., the extreme corruption of the human heart, and the absoluteness of divine grace. No one could be unmoved under his lively and incisive harangues. He stood face to face with the soul, and had a tone of intense reality. The African fire of his native temperament pervaded his discourses, only purified and attempered by the Spirit of God.

We would close this sketch of the preaching of the fourth and fifth centuries, and in fact of the first five centuries, by saying that although the preaching of the patristic period has been by some enthusiastic students overpraised, and its eloquence falsely compared to the best periods of Greek and Roman eloquence, yet, with all its faults, it is a rich field of study. It affords a still fresh region of homiletical research and suggestion. Luther called Augustine "the best and purest of the fathers," and from the reading of his sermons and writings he caught the true spirit, the deep meaning, and the renewing life of the word of God. In the earlier patristic preachers there was much that still lingered of the simple, artless evangelic spirit, which was mixed with and corrupted by the coming in of Greek philosophy, while at the same time it was deepened and adapted to the intellectual wants of men.

Patristic  
period a field  
of homiletical  
study.

<sup>1</sup> See Moule's "Oratory," pp. 177, 178; Aug. "Confess.," Ox. ed. p. 339.

We have thus traced the historic beginnings of the preaching office from the time of the apostles, and followed down the varied and changing current of preaching through the first five centuries, from the simple colloquial style of address to the dawning inception of art and the influence of Greek philosophy; through the theological period, strictly so called, to the broader development of the pulpit discourse, in what might be properly called "the oratorical period," uniting the expository with the didactic, analysis with synthesis, exegetical interpretation of the Bible with the rhetorical, methodized, and philosophic habit of thought, as exemplified especially in such great preachers as Chrysostom and Augustine. But during all this period, with all its faults and corruptions, we have discovered the grand truth that the Scriptures themselves continued to be regarded as the true and only basis of preaching, and that *interpretation* lay at the bottom of all address which aimed at bringing the kingdom of God in its spiritual power and supernatural claims to bear upon the minds of men.

If we derived but this one lesson from the study of the history of early and patristic preaching, it would be an ample reward.

#### SEC. 8. *Preaching from the Sixth Century to the Reformation.*

A longer time has been spent on the preceding five centuries of Christian preaching, from the fact that in them we were treating of the beginnings of things, of the influence of the apostolic institutions, and were tracing the origin and early development of the office of preaching in the Christian Church; but we must now move on more rapidly.

During the sixth century, while there were thoroughly educated and skilful orators as well as earnest preachers, who united culture with Christian faith and zeal, yet more and more the preaching tended to rhetorical skill and self-display. The rebuke of Athanasius to the preachers of his day would apply still more to those who came after them. He said : " If the church were an audience for the hearing of orators, then eloquent words would be in place ; but since it was a place of contention for the

**Tendency  
to rhetorical  
display and  
luxurious liv-  
ing in the  
clergy—  
rebuke of  
Athanasius.**

highest achievements of piety, words were not so much needed there as good conduct." The clergy of the Roman empire, east and west, grew luxurious in their habits, loved fine clothing and rich living ; and the bishops especially, who had by this time monopolized the preaching office, or at all events had monopolized the entire control of it, lost their zeal for preaching ; and yet, in spite of this, and notwithstanding the gross corruptions and superstitions that began to make their appearance in the Church, there still continued to be in the Church an earnest desire to interpret the word of God to men ; and this was undoubtedly the main purpose of all the great preachers of the age.

But when we come down as late as the seventh century, we find that preaching was beginning to sink to those depths of degradation, which continued to grow more and more profound, even to the time preceding the Reformation. The idea of bringing the word of God to bear directly on the mind and heart of the people, as in previous ages, was more and more lost sight of, though it was not as yet entirely lost. In the middle of the eighth century, at the Council of

**Downward  
tendency  
in seventh  
century.**

Cloveshire, for example, constituted for the reformation of abuses in the English Church, preaching was declared by the bishops to be a duty whenever they visited the different churches ; this implied that in the interval of these pastoral visitations the people had no public religious instruction. Afterward Charlemagne, in his time, exhorted his clergy to preach on certain occasions ; and Alcuin, his adviser, especially strove to renew this duty, which had almost fallen into complete disuse in the German and Gallic churches ; but where preaching was renewed, those who preached—the bishops themselves—were rude, unlearned men, and public worship had become a round of senseless forms and ceremonials. True preaching had lost its important place in worship ; its light was put out in the temple. Certain “ postils ” (*postillæ*), originally signifying brief comments upon a text of Scripture, and which were short discourses or commonplaces that were manufactured by the bishops, to be recited by the preacher, were read. A collection of these homilies was first made by Alcuin, and a fuller one by two of his pupils, Rabanus Maurus and Haimo. They had for their principal themes the authority of the Roman Church, the glory of the Virgin, the flames of purgatory, and similar topics. An ancient English preacher of the better sort, Dan Jon Gaytrigg by name, mentions the “ six things ” which formed the theology and the subject-matter of preaching of his day. “ The fourteen points of the creed, the ten commandments, the seven sacraments, the seven works of mercy, the seven virtues, the seven deadly sins.” There can be no doubt that Christian truth was conveyed in such preaching ; but the

Attempts to  
revive the  
custom of  
preaching.

Charlemagne's  
efforts.

Postils.

Themes of  
preaching.



monastic system corrupted the Christianity of the Middle Ages (or those ages lying between the period of the destruction of the Roman empire and the Reformation), by promulgating the idea that there could be no true religious life outside of the monastery walls—in fact, as Dean Milman said, “Manichæism poisoned the life-blood of mediæval Christianity.” Some of the names of the great preachers of the Middle Ages, commencing from the time of Venerable Bede, in the last half of the seventh century and first half of the eighth, are Bede himself, who worthily modelled his preaching on the admirable homiletical precepts of Pope Gregory the Great; St. Boniface in the eighth century; Rabanus Maurus in the ninth century; St. Peter Damiani (reformer of the papacy in his day); Anselm and Peter Abelard in the eleventh century; St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Guaric, Abbot of Igniac, Peter, Bishop of Chartres, and Hugo St. Victor in the twelfth century; St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis of Assisi, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas of the thirteenth century; Berthold, the Franciscan, in the fourteenth century, and Thomas à Kempis in the fifteenth. Most of these were monks of the Franciscan and Dominican preaching orders. At first there was very little of regular preaching in the vernacular; but in the ninth century, at the councils of Mayence and Langres, some earnest effort seems to have been made to renew the office of regular preaching in the Church; and it was also decreed that the Christian faith should be taught to the people, and the Scriptures expounded to them in their vernacular. These, however, were but transient efforts, gleams athwart the darkness, that did not influence the deep prevailing

**Names of great preachers of the Middle Ages.**

**The preaching orders—preaching in the vernacular.**

want of religious instruction from the pulpit ; and all that related to public worship grew more and more sensuous and puerile. From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries there was much preaching in the common tongue by itinerant friars, of a highly fanatical kind. They dealt with the fears and superstitions of the people, who were indeed children in their hands. One of the chief aims of this preaching was to induce the people to enter upon the Church's pilgrimages and crusades. Still there were noble exceptions, throughout the so-called Dark Ages, of preachers, powerful both in human eloquence and true spirituality, like Berthold in the thirteenth century, John Wyclif, and that remarkable company of preachers of the fourteenth century who were called the " Friends of God," such as Erckhardt, Nicholas of Basle, Tauler, and Henry Suso.

Master Erckhardt, as he was termed, the Dominican, was a bold thinker, and with a pantheistic tendency, anticipating, it is said, the German transcendental philosophy; but he was still a true believer, keeping in company with Augustine, and holding the great facts of the divine personality and human responsibility.

Tauler. Tauler was a profound preacher, of the mystical type, contending against externalism in religion, and the meritoriousness of good works, and he was one of the originators of the old German theology, so fascinating to Luther and to all spiritually-minded men. Luther frequently referred to him and his sermons. He said (Epistol. xxiii. ad Spalatin): "*Si te delectat puram solidam antiquæ simillimam Theologiam legere in Germanica lingua effusam sermones Joh. Tauleri Prædicatoriæ professiones comparare tibi potes. Neque enim ego vel in*

*Latina vel in nostra lingua Theologiam vidi salubriorem, et cum Evangelio consonantiorem.*" Tauler's preaching was without art, and his sermons were simple developments, through meditation, of the word of God, like pure flowers springing up, under the sun and rain of heaven, from their hidden roots. They dwell chiefly upon Christ and divine love. They were brief "postils" in plain, comprehensible speech, showing the way to blessedness and the soul's perfection through Christ. They are, however, often profound in their spiritual meaning. The main principle of these old preachers was that "No work or service is good and perfect unless it is the simple, unselfish outflow of a divine principle of love and life in the heart; but if a man works for himself, for a reward, for a wherefore, he is a hireling, and not a true friend or servant of God."<sup>1</sup> These mystics as preachers are not to be despised, since they represent, like the apostle John himself, a faith deeper than that of their antagonists. They have seized upon a living principle, true in all ages, and the renewing principle of the Church, that preserves it from sinking into dead forms on the one hand, and dead philosophy on the other. Still, their doctrine of longing for union with God and of annihilation of self, was, to say the least, liable to run into errors.

We would say a word concerning another light of the Dark Ages, the greatest of the English early reformers and preachers, John Wyclif. John Wyclif was born in 1324 and died 1384. About 1363 he took his degree at Oxford and began his lectures on divinity, in which his first anti-papal opinions were put forth. These

John  
Wyclif.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pfeiffer's "Deutsche Mystiker der Vierzehnten Yahrhundert." 1845.

lectures made Oxford the centre of theological illumination, eclipsing the great fame of the University of Paris and the French schools. Wyclif owed something of his progressive tendency to the English Doctor Ockham, but far surpassed him in acuteness and boldness of views. Concerning this period, a recent English historian says : " The spare, emaciated frame of Wyclif, weakened by study and by asceticism, hardly promised a reformer who would carry on the stormy work of Ockham ; but within this frail form lay a temper quick and restless, an immense energy, an immovable conviction, an unconquerable pride. The personal charm which ever accompanies real greatness had only deepened the influence he derived from the spotless purity of his life. As yet, indeed, even Wyclif himself can hardly have suspected the immense range of his intellectual power. It was only the struggle that lay before him which revealed in the dry and subtle school-man the founder of our later English prose, a master of popular invective, of irony, of persuasion, a dexterous politician, an audacious partisan, the organizer of a religious order, the unsparing assailant of abuses, the boldest and most indefatigable of controversialists, the first reformer who dared, when deserted and alone, to question and deny the creed of the Christendom around him, to break through the tradition of the past, and with his last breath to assert the freedom of religious thought against the dogmas of the papacy." <sup>1</sup>

As a lecturer on divinity, Wyclif showed the greatest daring in theological speculation, with, however, a strong leaning to Augustine's doctrine of predestination. In 1374 he was presented to the parish of Lutterworth, re-

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Green's " A Short History of the English People," Harper's ed. p. 251.



maining through all his stormy career its priest and preacher ; laboring with great zeal, and preaching not only on Sundays but on the festival days ; showing himself, in another's language, " a most exemplary and unwearied pastor." Here he began his indomitable efforts at church reform, and his attacks upon the papacy : styling the pope " antichrist," " the proud, worldly priest of Rome," " the most cursed of clippers and purse-kervers" (cut-purses). He was the upholder of the rights of the Church of England against papal aggressions, and grew bolder in his assaults upon the doctrine of transubstantiation. He was soon summoned to appear before the Convocation, but was saved from condemnation through the influence of his powerful friend, John of Gaunt. His fundamental idea of the kingdom of God having reference immediately to the individual conscience swept away the whole tissue of the papal system of a mediating priesthood. Pope Gregory VI. issued several bulls having direct reference to him and his opinions ; on which he was summoned before the bishops' council at Lambeth, but again, through a happy turn of circumstances, escaped. He now commenced his great work of translating the Scriptures, and giving them to the people in their vernacular, and also of defending the Scriptures by constant preaching and writing, sagaciously addressed to the common mind of the English people. Here we see him as the founder of biblical preaching in England, which was addressed in plain, popular language to the minds and hearts of the common people. The historian before quoted thus remarks of this popular work of Wyclif—and with this quotation, which graphically characterizes the great English preacher of reform, we would end the sketch : " But Wyclif no longer looked for support to the learned or wealthier classes on whom he had

hitherto relied. He appealed, and the appeal is memorable as the first of such a kind in our history, to England at large. With an amazing industry he issued tract after tract in the tongue of the people itself. The dry, syllogistic Latin, the abstruse and involved argument which the great doctor had addressed to his academic hearers, were suddenly flung aside, and by a transition which marks the wonderful genius of the man, the school-man was transformed into the pamphleteer. If Chaucer is the father of our later English poetry, Wyclif is the father of our later English prose. The rough, clear, homely English of his tracts, the speech of the plowman and the tradesman of the day, though colored with the picturesque phraseology of the Bible, is in its literary use as distinctly a creation of his own as the style in which he embodied it—the terse, vehement sentences, the stinging sarcasms, the hard antitheses which roused the dullest mind like a whip. Once fairly freed from the trammels of unquestioning belief, Wyclif's mind worked fast in its career of scepticism. Pardons, indulgences, absolutions, pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints, worship of their images, worship of the saints themselves, were successively denied. A formal appeal to the Bible as the one ground of faith, coupled with an assertion of the right of every instructed man to examine the Bible for himself, threatened the very groundwork of the old dogmatism with ruin. Nor were these daring denials confined to the small circle of the scholars who still clung to him : with the practical ability which is so marked a feature of his character, Wyclif had organized, some few years before, an order of poor preachers, 'The Simple Priests,' whose coarse sermons and long russet dress moved the laughter of the clergy, but who now formed a priceless

Father of  
English  
prose.

organization for the diffusion of their master's doctrines. How rapid their progress must have been we may see from the panic-struck exaggerations of their opponents. A few years later every second man you met, they complain, was a Lollard ; the followers of Wyclif abounded everywhere, and in all classes, among the baronage in the cities, among the peasantry of the country-side, even in the monastic cell itself."<sup>1</sup>

Mention was made of the exceptionally noble preachers of the Middle Ages, and especially those of the fourteenth century, of whom Wyclif was the greatest. Of this same class, in the fifteenth century, John Huss, Gerson (*Doctor Christianissimus*), who was the founder of Gallikanism, and Savonarola, might be particularly noticed. We will dwell only upon the last

**Savonarola.**

of these, because as a preacher, he was the greatest. Jerome Savonarola was more truly a preacher than even Wyclif. His prophet's throne was the pulpit. His preaching not only moved the city of Florence, but all Italy and the papal church ; and its profound effects were seen in the Reformation of the next century. He was the Wesley and Whitefield of his age, combined with a higher order of genius than either. He took complete possession of his hearers—of their imagination, feeling, and will. He played upon every string, now appealing to the heart, and now assailing with tremendous force the conscience. He understood the power of this great instrumentality of preaching, ceaselessly laboring in his pulpit till he was cut off by a violent death. He was born at Ferrara in 1452, and was burned at the stake in Florence in 1498, his life thus nearly covering the last half of the fifteenth century. The history of his life, like that

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<sup>1</sup> Green's "History of the English People," p. 206.

of Luther's, in its great events and steps, is so familiar a one that we need not give it circumstantially, since it is especially as a preacher that our attention is now directed to him. The year after his birth, in 1453, Constantinople was taken by the Turks, so that he felt during his whole life, and especially as a citizen of Florence, the influence of the dispersion of the Greeks, and the rise of the "New Learning" during the early part of that marvellous period of the Renaissance. His intellectual and spiritual life was greatly influenced by this. The coming of large numbers of the most learned Greek scholars to Italy, and their reception and patronage by the Medici family, opened the treasures of ancient literature, and gave birth not only to new ideas in art and philosophy, but also in political science and religious civilization. The effete political and religious systems of the Middle Ages began to be assailed by bold thinkers, and among these none thundered so terribly against the towers of bigotry and tyranny as did the Dominican monk-preacher of San Marco at Florence, Jerome Savonarola.

No complete collated edition of his sermons has yet been printed. There are said to be two large MS. volumes of his sermons, written in very small hand, that have never been published; but there has been renewed interest of late in the history and works of this wonderful man, both in Germany and Italy. Perhaps the best and fairest life of him is from a Roman Catholic source, that of Pasquale Villari, which has been recently translated into English.

Savonarola is another eminent instance of an expository or biblical preacher, and of the superior advantages of such a style of preaching. In his period of training for the pulpit he devoted himself almost exclusively to the study of the Scriptures.

**Expository  
preaching.**



His Bible, which was until recently exhibited at St. Mark's Convent in Florence, bears every mark of being well thumbed, and is filled with marginal notes written in an exceedingly minute hand. One author says of him : " He was early led to begin a series of expository sermons, and it was in such expositions that he exhibited that wonderful power in the pulpit which marked his after years. At Breccia, in 1486, he gave a series of expository sermons on the book of Revelation. Such was the effect of these that his reputation soon began to spread far and wide. Among his extant works are to be found sermons on the books of Exodus, Ruth, Esther, Job, the Psalms, the Song of Solomon, Ezekiel, Micah, Zechariah, and the First Epistle of John."

There was another cause of his great power in the pulpit—his voice and attractive delivery. When he made his first attempt to preach in Florence it was a decided failure—a great audience dwindling down to twenty-five. His voice was harsh, his gestures uncouth; his whole manner showed total want of tact and adaptation to the preaching office.

Voice and  
delivery.

A recent writer says of him :

" It was not until the year 1485 that he rose superior to the physical disadvantages which had marred his earlier efforts in the pulpit. We have no record of the various means to which he had recourse, in order to overcome the natural defects of which his first auditors complained. But he was one who would be unlikely to rest contented until he had discovered the cause of his failure; and he had so learned the lesson of self-control and self-abnegation as to be able to receive with meekness, if not with thankfulness, the suggestions of those who could point out his defects and show him how to remedy them.

Humbert de Romanis, the general of the Order of Dominicans, many years before, had urged those in whom there was a talent for preaching—that most excellent gift—to cultivate it assiduously. No doubt his work was familiar to Savonarola, and its precepts were obeyed. There must have been long and patient training of his vocal powers ; for we find him no longer speaking with weak, harsh tones, but filling the vast, crowded area of the Duomo at Florence with his clear, loud, ringing voice. Nothing but well-directed, honest, and long-continued culture in all that pertained to the art of oratory could have wrought the change which soon became manifest to all.”

He attacked the immorality of the times and of the papal church with such boldness and even fierceness that his career as preacher was soon cut short by martyrdom. He, as well as Chrysostom and Luther, are to be especially remembered as illustrating the aggressive power of those who as preachers take their stand on the word of God, and trust more to it than to philosophy or theology. Savonarola was in the habit of commending those preachers of olden time who, in his own words, “using the Holy Scriptures with a simple and familiar language, marvellously spread light and love among the people ; and he had learned by his own experience as a preacher, that by putting aside tiresome questions, and explaining in their stead the holy Scriptures, the faithful have at all times been enlightened and charmed.” Let us remember these words of men who shook the world from their pulpit thrones, in days when the pulpit is, comparatively speaking, so weak.

“Savonarola was certainly born with that kind of eloquence which may be called combative. Fully persuaded that he had a divine mission, no sooner did he come into

the presence of the people than he felt himself in a state of exaltation, and he gave free course to his thoughts ; then his fancy was lighted up, his power revived, his energy was redoubled. If, in obedience to duty, he felt that he ought to restrain himself, the bright color of his imagination would most assuredly have all vanished, the whole vigor of his eloquence would have been subdued.”<sup>1</sup>

The first series of his sermons on the First Epistle of John belongs to the year 1491. “ He always begins with a quotation from the Bible, around which he gathers all his theological ideas in conformity with his system of interpretation, bringing in their support some new passage taken from the Bible. We have thus a heterogeneous mass of ill-assorted materials, amid which the hearer becomes lost. Suddenly, however, Savonarola sets himself entirely free ; his discourse has turned upon some subject of the time, deeply interesting to himself and his audience ; his fancy is kindled, gigantic images rise up before him, his voice becomes more sonorous, his gestures more animated, his eyes seem to flash fire, and from that moment he becomes original, a great and powerful orator. But soon he falls back again into that artificial world of ideas, ill-connected and ill-digested, to rise again from them and again to fall back ; never being able to succeed in freeing himself entirely from them, nor ever allowing them to be entirely dominant over him. In this way whoever reads and diligently examines those sermons will be obliged to confess that Savonarola was born an orator, but that he was wholly wanting in the art of oratory. Hence, when the subject was so deeply interesting to him as to have complete mastery over him,

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<sup>1</sup> “ Hist. of Savonarola and his Times,” Pas. Villari, v. i. p. 124.

nature took the place of art, and then only was he eloquent."<sup>1</sup>

The same author goes on to remark (and what he says is the more worthy of notice since, as has been said, he writes from a Roman Catholic standpoint): "The somewhat too simple and ingenuous eloquence that we find in the sermons of the thirteenth century had disappeared, such as those of Bernardo of Siena and his followers. The preachers, if not of the grammarian class (who were pedantic), were more like vulgar players, and spoke in a kind of scholastic jargon, which was no longer understood. Hence the secret of Savonarola's great success is to be traced to the affectionate warmth he himself felt, and with which he inspired the people. His voice alone had a familiar and domestic tone. His eloquence had a natural and masterful character. He spoke in a language that touched the hearts of the multitude; he discoursed on the matters that nearly concerned them; he alone fought sincerely for truth, and had a fervent love for all virtue, and felt deeply the misfortunes of those he was addressing; and therefore in that century he alone was eloquent. Since the cessation of the holy eloquence of the Christian fathers, no other voice but his has been found worthy to be transmitted to posterity. To him it is due that sermons were again held in honor, and received a new life, and hence he may be termed the first of modern orators."<sup>2</sup>

The following is an extract from his sermon on love or charity, preached at Advent, 1493: "The gospel, my Christian brethren, must be your constant companion. I speak not of the book, but of its spirit. If you have not the spirit of grace, although you carry the whole volume

<sup>1</sup> Villari; see v. i. pp. 129, 130-135.

<sup>2</sup> Id., pp. 135, 136.



about with you, it will be of no avail. And how much more foolish are those who go about loaded with briefs and tracts, and look as if they kept a stall at a fair. Charity does not consist of sheets of paper. The true books of Christ are the apostles and saints ; the true reading of them is to imitate their lives. But now men have become the books of the devil."

The sermon on the " City of the Foolish " is an instance of his boldness in attacking the sins of the age, and the city where he lived. " He dealt with the evil habits of the day, with religion and with the Church, condemning princes and priests ; and he came to the conclusion that punishment was near at hand, and that the good ought to wish for it. Having expounded his whole doctrine, Savonarola throws down a gauntlet of defiance to all potentates on earth ; to all princes, whether temporal or ecclesiastical ; to the wealthy, to the dignitaries among the clergy and the governments—all became the objects of his charges. I am, he said, like hail, which bruises every one who has no shelter."

In regard to his so-called prophetic gift, Villari says : " It was one of those moments of which he used to say, ' An inward fire consumes my bones and forces me to speak out.' He was then carried away by a kind of ecstasy, in which the future seemed to open up before him. When this followed him into the solitude of his cell, he remained a long time the victim of visions, and was kept awake whole nights, until sleep, getting the better of him, brought refreshment to his wearied body. But, on the other hand, when this state of ecstasy took possession of him in the pulpit, in the presence of the whole people, there were no bounds to his exaltation ; it exceeded all that words can describe ; he became as it were the master of all his hearers, and carried them

along with him in the same degree of excitement. Men and women of all ages and conditions—artisans, poets, philosophers—sobbed aloud, so that the walls of the church echoed their wailings. ‘The individual who was taking down the words of the preacher, having had to stop, wrote, ‘At this place I was so overcome by weeping that I could not go on.’ Savonarola himself had to sit down from exhaustion; sometimes he was so much affected as to cause an illness that confined him to his bed for several days. His written sermons cannot convey any adequate idea of the eloquence of those moments; many of the words must have been missed in a report, and what remained can have none of the ardor with which they were uttered. We can the more readily believe in the high state of exaltation of the orator, in his extraordinary vehemence, and in what may be called the eloquence of his person and gestures, because the little that remains of the words which fell from his lips in those solemn moments hardly accounts for the great effect his discourses produced on the Florentine public, at that time the most cultivated in Europe.”<sup>1</sup> He foretold his own violent death in words of eloquent pathos.<sup>2</sup> Savonarola’s testimony in regard to his prophetic gift is thus quoted: “I am not,” he said, “either a prophet or the son of a prophet. I do not dare to assume that awful name; but I am certain that the things I announce will come to pass, because they spring from Christian doctrine, from the spirit of evangelical charity. In truth the sins of Italy are your sins, by force of which I am a prophet, and which ought to make every one of you a prophet. Heaven and earth prophesy against you, but ye neither see nor hear them. You are struck by mental blind-

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<sup>1</sup> Villari, v. i. pp. 300, 301.<sup>2</sup> Id., p. 298.

ness ; you shut your ears to the voice of the Lord, who calls you. If you had the spirit of charity you would all see it as I see it, that the scourge is approaching.”<sup>1</sup>

To sum up this sketch : his main style of preaching was expository, dwelling chiefly on the prophetic books of the Old Testament, such as Habakkuk, Ezekiel, and the Psalms. He was reared in the Platonic philosophy, and much influenced by the scholastic philosophical writings. He was a political preacher, and may be considered as the founder of the Florentine republic. In his own lifetime he ruled Florence from his pulpit. He was a poet and man of literature and the arts, a friend of Fra Bartolommeo and other painters. He was a many-sided and truly great man. His chief sources of power were his consecrated, holy character, his intense study of the Scriptures, and his great nature, that was alive to all the wants and sympathies of man's heart. He may be said, in some sense, to have failed as a reformer, perhaps from the fact that he was not only a political preacher in the true sense, but he dealt with the actual weapons and firebrands of political strife, and of course fell an early victim to them.

To retrace our steps, and to speak of the Middle Ages as a whole, the greatest Catholic or purely ecclesiastic mediæval preacher, in point of eloquence and wide influence, was Bernard of Clairvaux. He was born in 1091, and died in 1153. He is sometimes called “the last of the fathers,” and his contemporaries gave him the title of “the thirteenth apostle.” Dean Milman says of him that “when he appeared, the pope ceased to be the centre around whom gather the great events of Christian history, and St. Ber-

**Bernard of  
Clairvaux.**

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<sup>1</sup> Villari, v. i. ch. vi.

nard is the leading and governing head of Christendom." As an orator, judging by the immediate effects of his eloquence, he would have been remarkable in any age. His impelling power of speech roused all Europe until "The cross! the cross!" became the universal cry. With mingled motives of faithfulness to God and zeal for the triumph of the Church, he confronted and bore down the greatest opposition. As an interpreter of the Scriptures he was fanciful and discursive, but always glowing with earnestness. Though inclined to mysticism, yet there was much of the true doctrine of Christ in his writing, which contrasts favorably with the jejune scholasticism of the times; and here it may be remarked that, whether in the Greek or the Latin, in the Roman Catholic or the Protestant preacher, where there is genuine spiritual power, it springs not so much from the genius of the man, or the system under which he is reared, as from the hold his mind has upon the word of God. It is the divine unction, or anointing of the Spirit, which breathes something of the divine into the utterances of a human soul, and makes him the mouthpiece of God; and instead of utterly condemning Roman Catholicism or any other form of the Christian Church, however corrupt, it were more in accordance with the spirit of Christ to try to look for the evidences of true doctrine and of Christian life and power in these forms; seeing that the Spirit is not bound, and can make use of imperfect men in every age and every mode of the Christian faith. Bernard's writings were numerous, and of his sermons there are said to be some 340 extant. Though naturally impetuous, and though he could be terrible and fierce, gaining for himself the title of the "Dog of the Church," yet a vein of pathetic tenderness runs through his preaching, especially in the exegetical discourses de-



livered after the death of a dearly loved younger brother. He not only professed with his monastic vows a lofty and world-abnegating holiness, but he seems to have lived up to it. Luther said of him : " If there ever lived on this earth a God-fearing and holy monk, it was St. Bernard of Clairvaux." Bernard says, in one of his homilies, " What is ours but an insect life? Well may we ask, with the wise man, ' What profit hath a man, for all his labor under the sun? ' Let us then rise higher than the sun ; let us mount up to heaven, and have our thoughts and affections there before our bodies are transported thither. Earth is nothing but a battle-field. We must fight here for Him who liveth in the heaven of heavens ; there with Him shall we rest from our labors, and receive our crown."

Before the time of St. Bernard, St. Peter Damiani was one of the most prominent mediæval preachers, though his sermons were of a strictly conventual order ; but in his stern monastic asceticism there runs also a vein of remarkable mildness.

**St. Peter  
Damiani.**

Anselm, too, was a great preacher as well as theologian and statesman, though we have but sixteen of his sermons upon which to found our judgment.

**Anselm.**

These are formed upon one model, taking the gospel of the day, and expounding it verse by verse. The discourses are somewhat long and abstract, and were probably preached to monks. Thomas Aquinas, the scholastic theologian, was a priest of the Dominican preaching order, and his sermons in the Latin and also Italian

**Thomas  
Aquinas—  
Guaric.**

language, though highly polemical, like his writings, have the same character of acuteness, clearness, and metaphysical vigor. Guaric, Abbot of Igniac, who modelled himself upon St. Bernard, was in his day a remark-

able preacher, of a mystical but highly devotional style.

Peter of Chartres— Peter of Blois— Anthony of Padua— Albertus Magnus— Thomas à Kempis.	Peter, Bishop of Chartres, was a more instructive preacher, perhaps, than any of these, though not so eloquent. Peter of Blois was called, in reference to his sermons, " <i>divinissimus</i> ." St. Anthony of Padua (not Anthony the founder of monasticism) is renowned for his pithy, odd, and story-telling preaching. Albertus Magnus had much that is ingenious and not much that is practical and weighty in his preaching. Thomas à
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Kempis, though he possibly may not have written the "*De Imitatione*," yet was a preacher entirely in the vein of that incomparable work.

We have mentioned the names of these preachers, as well as the names of the mystical preachers of the fourteenth century, and of a few of the more distinctive reformers through these ages, with some particularity, to

General summing up of mediæval preaching.	show that we cannot condemn mediæval preaching in a wholesale way, nor despise altogether its study. With its monstrous faults, that seemed at times to extinguish the pure light of the gospel; with its system of belief that regarded certain requirements connected with the Church in the light of an <i>opus operatum</i> ; with its total failure of preaching through long periods; with its Latin homilies, and, in the later scholastic ages, its endless hair-splitting speculations; with its ascetic piety; with its childish and often totally irreverent mode of illustration—with all these faults it still had some marked merits, which Protestant preachers at this day would do well to note.
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(I.) Its popular quality. Many of these mediæval preachers had a highly popular talent, and were wonder-

fully successful in adapting themselves to a rustic auditory, as was said to be the case with the Venerable Bede. They spoke coarsely but strongly to rude minds. They introduced anecdotes and stories, which, if not always in good taste, were fitted to interest the people, and were sometimes very beautiful and touching, like the story of Elizabeth of Thuringia, and also the one of St. Christopher. German and English preachers were more accustomed to this kind of free and lively illustration than the French and Italian. They sometimes introduced the most ludicrous and burlesque stories, and even vulgar and blasphemous ones. Robert of Abrissel was especially famous for this buffoonery, attracting crowds as to a low comedy. Oliver Maillard, preacher of Louis XI., and Michael Menot, of a later age, were also examples of humoristic preachers. Doubtless many things were said by them in simplicity and from pure ignorance; thus Abraham and Isaac are represented by one of these preachers as going up Mount Moriah reciting "*aves*" and "*paternosters*," not in French or Latin, but in Hebrew. One preacher calls Christ *l'Abbé Jesus*. Nicholas de Lyra says that Jesus was of the order of Friars Minorites. Cornelius Musso, a bishop who affected classical learning, speaks of our Lord as "dying like Hercules, rising like Apollo or Esculapius, ascending to heaven as a true Bellerophon, a second Perseus who had slain the Medusa that changed men into stones."

Popular  
talent of  
mediæval  
preachers.

(2.) Its dramatic element. This quality of the preaching of the Middle Ages, which takes truth out of the abstract, and is ever "doing" or "acting" as in life, is not to be overlooked and contemned, as it grew to be afterward in the

Dramatic  
element.

rationalizing view of Christian truth that prevailed after the Reformation ; for thereby power is lost. The preacher shrewdly appealed to examples and to facts. There was a freshness and homely force in the manner of putting things which was admirable. We see this in the best of preachers, like Wyclif and Hugh Latimer.

(3.) Its symbolical or spiritual use of Scripture. Another characteristic of mediæval preaching which is not to be too

**Symbolical  
and allegori-  
cal use of  
Scripture.**

hastily spoken against, is its finding of spiritual instruction in all kinds and portions of holy writ, using it in the way of type and allegory. The past was made to teach the present. Present wars were found in the old wars of the Jews. The troubles and tribulations of the heart were hidden under some Old Testament story, or some prophetic figure. This at first sight is a fault, and happily is one which will not be reintroduced, to a great extent, into preaching ; but there is something to be said in its favor in this respect, that it served to give a sacred flavor, a mellow biblical tone to the sermons of some of these preachers. It led them to regard the whole Bible, the Old Testament as well as the New, as a spiritual granary, in every nook and corner of which food might be obtained for the nourishment of piety. But what is called technically “allegorical preaching” is certainly not to be recommended.

(4.) Its abundant use of Scripture citation. Their very use of Scripture for the purposes just named compelled

**Abundant  
use of  
Scripture  
citation.**

preachers to this. It would indeed be surprising to most of us, who are in the habit of thinking that Luther and the reformers restored the Bible to the pulpit, to find how saturated are those sermons of the Middle Ages with the sacred writings—turned often wholly out of their right



meanings, and absurdly applied—but nevertheless giving an indescribably devotional tone to sermons. These quotations do not seem to be made for the purpose of propping up dogmas, but they appear to be the natural expressions of religious sentiments—the only forms in which the minds of these rather childish and untaught preachers ran in expressing their feelings on divine themes.<sup>1</sup>

(5.) Its fruits of meditative piety. One might also say something favorable of the rare fruits of meditation and of contemplative wisdom to be found in the Middle Ages—of even a profound self-abnegating love and faith—shining like gems in dark caverns. In addition to this list of

**Fruits of  
meditative  
piety.**

what may be said in favor of mediæval preaching, it might also be said that in the earlier part of this period some of the preaching was of a noble aggressive character. This was the age of the great missionary preachers of the Romish Church, to whose heroic efforts we ourselves owe the Bible and Christianity.

We will not enter into the more familiar and prolific theme of the crudities and absolute falsities of monkish and mediæval preaching—its obscuring of the vital truths of the word. Some of these have already been suggested; and, with such noble exceptions as have been mentioned, preaching was, it must be confessed, generally but as the blind leading the blind. Brawling and ignorant priests used their spiritual authority, and their office as leaders of the people, to foment discords in the state, to fasten the chains of ecclesiastical tyranny more firmly, and to carry

**Crudities  
and  
falsities of  
mediæval  
preaching.**

<sup>1</sup> See Neale's "Mediæval Preaching."

out their own crafty and evil purposes. The period even immediately preceding the Reformation witnessed a most profound depth of degradation in the manner and matter of preaching. The harangues of the pulpit were addressed to the lowest passions, and, above all, to the sentiment of the marvellous ; and they sometimes consisted wholly in the detailing of absurd legends hatched in the brains of half-cunning, half-fanatical monks, in the cells of monasteries. Mummeries were

**Mummeries  
and  
absurdities.**

enacted in the pulpit. Anything like a pious sentiment, at one period, in the pulpits of prominent cathedral churches was considered almost insupportable ; and at the Easter season especially, preachers taxed their ingenuity to invent all kinds of folly and vulgar witticisms, to amuse the audience and to excite roars of laughter ; and, generally speaking, though there were ever exceptions to this, preaching had come to such a pass that, when Luther arose, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, he saw the necessity of reforming not only the Church, but the pulpit itself, and the Church through the pulpit. Reuchlin and Erasmus, it must be said, had somewhat prepared the way for and preceded him in this idea. Erasmus's book, written in 1535, a year before his death, entitled " *Ecclesiastes, sive concionator evangelicus*," sets forth in a clear and impressive manner the needs and qualities of true evangelical preaching : I. Qualifications ; II. Examples and illustrations of eloquence ; III. The use or handling of Holy Scripture.

Before, however, leaving this theme of mediæval preaching, we would gather up a few small items of a nobler kind, chiefly from Neander's Church History, in order that we may

**Mediæval  
gems.**

see that the Spirit of God had not forsaken the Church

or its ministers in these ages. For example, St. Bernard preached, with a liberality beyond his age, that "infidels should not be put to death or suffer loss, but only prevented from oppressing Christians." St. Francis of Assisi said that "a heart fixed in God is all that gives actions their real importance." Otto, Bishop of Pomerania, when presented by some of his people with a rare and delicate dish for his table, said, "Give this costly dish to Christ"—that is, to the poor. As a fruit of similar teaching, it is related in the twelfth century of the wealthy father of a family who, whenever he went to the church, was accustomed to take provisions with him to feed one poor family, proving his faith by his works. Ambrose of Siena set forth very distinctly the social duties and influence of the Christian man. Richard à Sancte Victore calls the changing light and darkness in the life of the soul "a needful darkness, a necessary vicissitude of this present earthly life, where it cannot always be clear day as it is in heaven ; but there must be, as in the sphere of the natural world, day and night." Abbot Bernard of Tiron says : " All virtues besides love are perishable ; but this consists of the essence of all God's commandments ; by this alone the disciples of Christ are distinguished from the children of anti-christ." Ægidius of Assisi declared that " only through humility can man attain to the knowledge of God ; the path upward begins downward." Guibert of Novigentum, in the twelfth century, who wrote on homiletics, insisted upon the preacher's preaching Christian morality, and treating of the motives of actions. He said : " No sermon was more useful than that which showed men to themselves, and led back those who, by the distraction of outward things, had become estranged from themselves in the secret recesses of their hearts ; present-

ing them as if reflected from a mirror to their own eyes." He also advised brevity in preaching, because otherwise hearers could not retain it in their memories. Another father, Alanus ab Insulis, of the thirteenth century, who was a writer on homiletics, or "*Summa de arte prædicatoria*," defines preaching to be, *Predicatio est manifesta et publica instructio morum et fidei, informatione hominum deserviens et rationum semita et auctoritatem fonte proveniens.*" He held to the theory (not so defensible) that preaching must be addressed to believers, as other men held it in contempt, and therefore they could not be benefited. "*Indignis et obstinatis subtrahenda est prædicatio.*"

Humbert de Romanis sets the preaching of Christ even above prayer. Thomas Aquinas, learned theologian as he was, took the greatest pains to preach plainly to the common people. Abelard said that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. But the perfection of it is pure love to God for his own sake." Said Anselm, "The highest truth is that which manifests itself to the spirit." And Alexander of Hales declared that "Theology itself is more a matter of wisdom and temper than of systematic knowledge. It is rather divine wisdom than human science."

#### SEC. 9. *Preaching of the Reformation Period.*

The iron unity of the Church of the Middle Ages, both outward and inward, pressing all minds into one mould and repressing thought on religious subjects, could only be broken up by a strong instrument. Arnold of Brescia—Savonarola—Wyclif—Huss—Waldo. Arnold of Brescia, Savonarola in Italy, Wyclif in England (called the true founder of the English pulpit), Huss and Jerome in Bohemia, Waldo in France, had done their



preparatory work ; but there needed to be a man sent from God to do the work for all the groaning nations. Luther was that man.

There is no need of relating the thrice-familiar story of Martin Luther's life. By nature he was endowed with great human sympathies and passions, with **Luther.** lively imagination, with manly earnestness and singleness of aim, and with a heroic love of truth. It was this last quality, by the grace of God, which led him from being, as he called himself, "the most insane of papists," to be a reformer of the Church of God. An English historian says of him : "Men of Luther's stature are like the violent forces of nature herself—terrible when roused, and in repose majestic and beautiful. Of vanity he had not a trace. 'Do not call yourselves Lutherans,' he said ; 'call yourselves Christians. Who and what is Luther? Has Luther been crucified for the world?' I mentioned his love of music. His songs and hymns were the expression of the very inmost heart of the German peoples. Music he called 'the grandest and sweetest gift of God to man.' 'Satan hates music,' he said ; 'he knows how it drives the evil spirit out of us.' He was extremely interested in all natural things. Before the science of botany was dreamed of, Luther had divined the principle of vegetable life. 'The principle of marriage runs through all creation,' he said ; 'and flowers as well as animals are male and female.' A garden called out bursts of eloquence from him, beautiful sometimes as a finished piece of poetry. . . . Erasmus considered that sometimes a lie might be as good as truth ; but a lie, ascertained to be a lie, to Luther was poison—poison to him, and poison to all who meddled with it. In his own genuine greatness he was too humble to draw insolent distinctions in his own favor, or to

believe that any one class on earth is of more importance than another in the eyes of the Great Maker of them all.”<sup>1</sup>

Upon the vivid and dramatic power of eloquence like Luther's, Dr. Bushnell remarks: “It is a fact to be carefully noted that all the best saints and most impressive teachers of Christ are those who have found how to present him best in the dramatic forms of his personal history. Such were Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Tauler, Wesley. Those great souls could not be shut up under the opinional way of doctrine, or even under their own opinions. Their gospel was not dry, and thin, and small in quantity as being in man's quantity, and therefore soon exhausted; it was no part of their idea to be always hammering in or hammering on some formulated article, but they had a wonderful outspreading of life and volume, because they breathed so freely the supernatural inspirations of Christ, and let their inspirations forth in such grand liberties of utterance. They were men thoroughly Christed by their inspirations and deep beholdings in the gospel facts. They had gotten such insight into the ways and times and occasions of their Master's life that subjects enough and truths always fresh were springing into form in all points of the story. And they were not mere surface subjects; but they were cogent, massive, piercing, pricking in conviction, melting ice-bound states away, battering down every citadel of prejudice, and flowing out in senses of God that make a wonderfully divine atmosphere about the circles they live in, and the audiences before which they appear.”<sup>2</sup>

We will speak more definitely of Luther's oratorical

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<sup>1</sup> Froude's “Short Studies on Great Subjects.”

<sup>2</sup> “Sermons on Living Subjects,” p. 86.

training ; but would now only say that by art and study he was the possessor of great erudition for his time ; at the same time metaphysician and poet, musician and linguist, the master of a forcible, popular eloquence ; and to all these advantages were added a deep religious nature, a power of intuition in spiritual things, an invincible faith in the word of God and in the divine instrumentality of preaching. Luther plucked up preaching from the mire in which it had fallen, and reinstated it as the central light in the house of God. From its fanciful and allegorical character, its scholastic and dry and dead forms of Aristotelian logic, he restored the true idea of preaching—viz., the scriptural homily, or the bringing of pure biblical truth to bear directly on the reason, conscience, and sympathy of men. He was eminently practical in his view of truth, holding that truth was of no value unless it bore upon the reality of things, upon the kingdoms of good and evil in the world ; and thus in his use of truth he was eminently the preacher instead of the philosopher, employing preaching as an instrumentality in the vernacular tongue. Michelet says : “ He treated religion in his mother tongue ; by that he moved the world.” The great work which he did, though aided and confirmed by his writings, was chiefly carried forward by his preaching ; he said himself, “ It is the word which has consumed the papacy, and no emperor or prince could have done this.” There was wonderful spiritual vitality in his preaching, which affected the lives of men before he broke with the papacy, or even supposed himself to be a reformer of the Church. His preaching thus led others on, and he was himself led on

**Learning  
and  
acquirements.**

**Rescued  
preaching  
from its  
neglect.**

**Reformation  
carried forward  
chiefly by his  
preaching.**

by his preaching. Truly, his words were "half battles."

**Character  
and quality of  
preaching.**

Luther said of his work and his preaching, "I was born to fight with devils and factions. This is the reason that my writings are so boisterous and stormy. It is my business to remove obstructions, to cut down thorns, to fill up quagmires, and to open and make straight the paths; but if I must necessarily have some failing, let me rather speak the truth with too great severity than once to act the hypocrite, and conceal the truth." He was dogmatic, overbearing, and coarse, as in his controversies with Erasmus and Zwingli; he was bitter, sarcastic, and brought every kind of force in him to bear upon his adversaries, even his poetic and musical talent.

**Oratorical  
education.**

As to Luther's oratorical education, he devoted himself at Erfurth with the greatest diligence to humanistic studies. Melancthon says: "As his mind, full of zeal for learning, aspired to greater and better attainments, he read most of the works of the old Latin authors—Cicero, Virgil, Livy, and others. These he also read, not in the manner of boys, who seize only upon the words, but as true lessons and portraitures of human life. Therefore he clearly perceived the intent and meaning of these authors, and as he possessed a true and tenacious memory, that which was best in what he had read and heard was ever present before his eyes." Luther in his writings spoke strongly of the value of such studies, and he often expressed his wonder at the wisdom of pagan writings. He saw in them sometimes the teachings of God's good Spirit. He cultivated, above all, those authors of antiquity who could aid him in speaking, and he agreed with Erasmus in thinking that Quintilian was the greatest teacher of the oratorical art. He also pursued studies in philosophy, in natural



science, in history, having a broad conception of the culture which a preacher and teacher of the people required. But above all he gave himself to the study of the Scriptures, thinking that there was the preacher's whole treasury of truth. And in the first place he strove to make himself a master of the original languages of the Scriptures. He said it was a shame that Christians did not understand their own book, the word which God had given them, and the very words in which God had given it to them ; and there is no doubt but that his study of the Scriptures, to translate them so as to give them to the people in their own tongue, gave him his wondrous power as a preacher to reach the religious nature. He spoke freely and directly out of the word. He was filled with it. He recognized its unity as the testimony and the testament of Christ. He rose above its letter into its spirit. He thus became mighty in the Scriptures, and used the word of God as an irresistible sword to conquer all opposition, error, and unbelief. He was another, and perhaps still greater instance of the preacher who draws his strength immediately from the word—who is its true interpreter and witness. And it is to be remembered, as Michelet says, that while other preachers of the Middle Ages and of his times spoke mostly in Latin, he preached in German to Germans as a German, and with what vigor and what freshness ! Next to his fidelity to biblical truth, or the evangelic spirit in his preaching, he mastered audiences by his emotional power, his passion, his immense vitality. His nature, full of great affections and great feelings, was itself a mighty power.

Melancthon said that "Luther's words were born, not on his lips but in his soul." They thus moved men profoundly, in spite of their occasional violence and immoderateness.

“ We take the precise man for a religious man. We are content to see him stiff in his black coat, choked in a white cravat, with a prayer-book in his hand. We confound piety with decency, propriety, permanent and perfect regularity. We proscribe to a man of faith all candid speech, all bold gesture, all fire and dash in word and act ; we are shocked by Luther’s rude words, the bursts of laughter which shook his mighty frame, his work-a-day rages, his plain and free speaking, the audacious familiarity with which he treats Christ and the Deity. We do not remember that these freedoms and this recklessness are simply signs of entire belief ; that warm and immoderate conviction is too sure of itself to be tied down to an irreproachable style ; that primitive religion consists not of formalities but of emotions.”<sup>1</sup>

As an illustration of Luther’s naïveté and realness there is the following passage from his table-talk : “ When Jesus Christ,” he said, “ was born, he doubtless cried and wept like other children, and his mother tended him as other mothers tend their children. As he grew up he was submissive to his parents, and waited on them, and carried his supposed father’s dinner to him ; but when he came back, Mary no doubt often said, ‘ My dear little Jesus, where hast thou been ? ’ ”

Luther’s best sermons are adjudged to be his church-postils (*kirchenpostille*) on from 1522, which were prepared to be read in the churches. His house-postils (*haus-postille*), while town preacher at Wittenburg, were perhaps almost as good, and were extemporaneously delivered. There are many other famous sermons which have been collected and published.

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<sup>1</sup> Taine’s “ English Literature,” v. i. p. 384.

His sermons remind one, in some respects, of those of Augustine, upon whom he modelled himself. They are plain and practical, oftentimes exhibiting an easy elegance of style, and they usually spring from the running exposition of passages of Scripture (*Perikopen*), sometimes without any special text ; but still, as a general rule, all the principal parts of the sermon—the text, the theme, the exposition, the argument, and the application—are found in his discourses. A large portion of them are upon doctrinal subjects—upon the being of God, and the creation ; upon sin, justification by faith, and the nature, character, and work of Christ ; upon the Church and its sacraments—but all with a strong controversial drift, contending against the pope and the Roman hierarchy ; mingling the contests that were then going on with the older conflict of light and darkness, of God and his enemy.

**Subjects of  
sermons.**

To sum up this description, it might be said, in a word, that Luther's preaching, as well as his writing, sprang from his profound conception of the gospel ; of the length and breadth, the height and depth of the work and the law of Jesus Christ.

**Summary  
of qualities  
as a  
preacher.**

He came more and more to see the spiritual aspects and inner substance of Christian faith. Christ was his unceasing theme. He said : " All the wisdom of the world is childish foolishness compared with the acknowledgment of Christ." He said again : " Jesus Christ is the only beginning and end of all my divine cogitations, day and night ; yet I find and freely confess that I have attained but only to a small and weak beginning of this deep and precious profundity." Merely rhetorically speaking, Luther, as was said, despised no learning, or art, or any other lawful weapon, such as

figurative illustration, allegory, story, irony, and wit ; yet he did not trust to any such weapon. He reproves preachers " who," he said, " aim at sublimity, difficulty, eloquence, who, neglecting the souls of the poor, sought their own praise and honor, and to please one or two persons of consequence."

Speaking of his own preaching, Luther said : " When a man comes into the pulpit for the first time, he is much perplexed by the number of heads before him. When I ascend the pulpit I see no heads, but imagine those that are before me to be all blocks. When I preach I sink myself deeply down ; I regard neither doctors nor masters, of which there are in the church above forty. But I have an eye to the multitude of young people, children, and servants, of which there are more than two thousand. I preach to them. I direct my discourse to those that have need of it. A preacher should be a logician and a rhetorician—that is, he must be able to teach and admonish. When he preaches on any article, he must first distinguish it, then define, describe, and show what it is ; thirdly, he must produce sentences from the Scripture to prove and to strengthen it ; fourthly, he must explain it by examples ; fifthly, he must adorn it with similitudes ; and, lastly, he must admonish and arouse the indolent, correct the disobedient, and reprove the authors of false doctrine."

Luther introduced freshness and nature into the pulpit, as well as knowledge, earnestness, and faith. He was more progressive and bolder in his preaching than even in his writing, for in the pulpit he was himself. There was a free speaking out from himself, as if he had broken from precedents and rules. We see the man ever in his words. There was strong personality, a fearless expression of individual experience, thought, and feeling of the truth. This



boldness, freshness, and naturalness, united with knowledge, and knowledge above all of God's word, made him a preacher whom the common people heard gladly. He was their prophet. He spoke to them directly, as from "the living oracles." He spoke political as well as religious truth. He preached from the abundance of a heart filled with the divine message, and, as by a kind of prophetic inspiration, making him the creator of a new time, illustrating the words of Neander: "A certain faculty of prophecy seems implanted in humanity; the longing heart goes forth to meet beforehand great and new creations; undefined presentiments hasten to anticipate the mighty future."<sup>1</sup>

Calvin, in some respects, was the exact opposite of Luther, both as a theologian and a preacher. More of a dialectician than orator, his work seemed to be the systemizing and co-ordinating of doctrine, rather than the preaching of living truth freshly to men. He had some of the best characteristics of the French mind—clearness, precision, logical ability. He was a great reasoner. He did not address the sentiments and passions, as did Luther, and draw men by their hearts; but he bound them fast in the serried links of his iron logic. Even in his early academic days, such was the trenchant positiveness of his character that his companions surnamed him the "Accusative." His style was neat, polished, and concise. Bossuet said of Calvin, "*Son style est triste*;" but Calvin, stern theologian as he was, had some of the qualities of a great preacher. He ruled the turbulent city of Geneva from his pulpit. He had a style, it is true, totally bare of ornament, and with no ray of imagination, or of anything that gave evidence

Calvin.

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<sup>1</sup> "Ch. Hist.," v. iv. p. 216.

of the influence of Nature, though he lived in the shadow of Mont Blanc ; but his preaching was weighty with biblical truth, clear in its reasoning, and burning with an intense purpose. There is no doubt, however, that, in all the qualities of genuine pulpit eloquence, Luther was much the greater preacher.

Calvin was passionless in his life ; he did not go through those mighty struggles with doubt and evil that Luther went through, and therefore he was not so truly a representative man as Luther was ; men and whole peoples did not see in him a type of themselves ; they did not go to him for aid and sympathy ; he was not, in fact, so genuinely a people's preacher. But he was the intellectual complement of Luther. He made up Luther's marked defects. He supplied the calm will, the regulative and reflective principle to the Reformation, which it needed ; and he is therefore to be looked upon as the legislator rather than the mouthpiece or prophet, or preacher, of that great movement. The Calvinistic system of theology, in many respects a reproduction of the Augustinian, has indirectly exerted an immense influence upon preaching, in some respects good, in others bad. So positively defined, so iron-bound in its logic, it powerfully moulds everything that comes into the grasp of its influence ; and it has in this way shaped the preaching of the Puritan churches in England and Scotland, and also in America, and served to give it its rigidly theological type.

**Zwingli,**  
**Farel, Haller,**  
**Bucer,**  
**Barnes, Knox,**  
**Cranmer,**  
**and the other**  
**Reformers.**

Zwingli, with his simple, manly, and heart-felt style of preaching ; Farel, Haller, Bucer, Barnes, and Bullinger ; Knox, Cranmer, Latimer, Jewel, Hooper, and the other German and English reformers—these aided to restore the dignity, earnestness, and biblical authority of the pulpit.

The preaching of the Reformation period had in it the missionary element ; it was again the true *κηρυξεία*, the voice of the herald to awaken the slumbering nations ; nor did it entirely lack what is to be seen also in Luther's preaching, the power of edification, the power to build up the spiritual life of the Church of Christ. The preaching of the Reformation, wherever its seeds were carried, was characterized by its scriptural directness, its freedom from ecclesiastical forms, and robust energy.

Latimer's preaching is particularly noteworthy for its strength, boldness, and quaint humor. He who could quote against Henry VIII. the passage,

Latimer.

"whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," and who comforted Ridley at the stake with such powerful and sublime words, could preach to the common people also with great familiarity. He too was a story-telling preacher, and his stories had all the vividness and point of Luther's. As one instance of his odd and plain speaking, I will quote what he said upon feminine apparel. "I think Mary had not much fine gear. She was not trimmed up as our women are nowadays. I think, indeed, Mary had never a fardingale ; for she used no such superfluities as our fine damsels do, for in the old time women were content with honest and single garments. Now they have found out these roundabouts ; the devil was not so cunning to make such gear—he found it out afterward." Latimer called the priests and bishops who failed to instruct their people in divine truth "bells without clappers"; and he speaks of "strawberry-preachers whose season was but once a year." He says of himself, "I have a manner of teaching which is very tedious to them that be learned. I am wont even to repeat those things which I have said before, which repetitions are nothing pleasant to the

learned ; but it is no matter—I care not for them : I seek more the profit of those which be ignorant than to please learned men. Therefore I often repeat such things which be needful for them to know, for I would so speak that they might be edified withal.” His famous illustration of the Goodwin sands and Tenterden steeple is an instance of his method of illustrating truth. He is often like Luther, coarse as well as strong, and had something of the monkish trait of saying ludicrous things and telling droll stories. It was Latimer who preached the sermon on “ The Devil Driving and Drowning his Hogs.” (1.) The devil will play at small game rather than none at all. (2.) They run fast whom the devil drives. (3.) The devil brings his hogs to a fine market. But this should not give a false impression. He was a great, eloquent, earnest, faithful preacher of God’s word, and a holy confessor and martyr.

The later preaching of the Reformation, both in Germany and England, did not deal so much in subjective views of truth as in its plain objective aspects ; but the mind, freed from its fetters, stood erect again, and transmitted the message of God with apostolic power and boldness. This, also, was the period, or the later portion of the period, of the revival of letters ; and though feebly at first, yet with increasing strength, the influence of the renewed study of the classic models was felt upon Christian eloquence, and entered more and more into the structure and style of preaching. The sermon soon began to lose somewhat of its biblical life and evangelic element, until, much later, in the age of German and French illuminism, in the *seventeenth* and *eighteenth* centuries, it had become

Later  
Reformed  
preaching.

The age of  
French and  
German  
illuminism,  
in the  
17th and 18th  
centuries.



nothing better than polished puerility, when preachers preached upon agriculture, the raising of tobacco, and the Copernican system. The French in particular fostered this classic barrenness and varnished impiety. The English pulpit was saved from this curse, in a great measure, by the early infusion into it of the Puritan element, when such profound and earnest preachers as Howe, Baxter, Flavel, and Owen arose.

SEC. 10. *Preaching in different lands since the Reformation.*

Owing to the liberalizing influence of the Reformation, there came to be a more spontaneous view of divine truth among the people; and there was also a development of the original genius of each nation in religious things and thought; so that each reformed nation became, at length, intellectually and spiritually represented by its own peculiar style of preaching. In Germany, France, England, Scotland, and afterward in America, the bent of the national mind or genius acted powerfully on the form of preaching in these several countries, and this also reacted on the political, intellectual, and social character of the type of civilization of these several countries.

We close this sketch of the history of preaching with a notice of the preaching of some of the leading Christian nations since the Reformation; and without speaking of the pulpits of Holland, Italy, Spain, and Russia, of which much might be profitably said—when we have such names as Carlo Borromeo of Italy, Constant de la Fuente of Spain, Simeon Polotrki of the Greek Church, Van der

Character  
of preaching  
in different  
countries  
of the  
Reformation,  
how  
influenced.

Preaching of  
Holland,  
Italy, Spain,  
Russia.

Palm of Holland, and many others—we will say a few words of the more distinctively reformed countries, Germany, England, and America ; and also of France, which was but partially reformed at last, and sank back into the power of the Roman Church.

The German pulpit has always retained something of the freedom, fire, and naturalness of the Reformation

period, and it might be said of the style of

**The German  
pulpit.**

Luther, who stamped his influence upon

German preaching, being characterized by its lively exposition of the Scriptures and ethical quality, accompanied with hortatory earnestness and emotional glow. More attention, indeed, has been paid in Germany than in any other country to pure-

ly homiletical studies. There are more

**German  
works on  
Homiletics.**

works in this language on "Homiletics" than there are found in any other. From

all of Luther's works Conrad Porta, in 1586, gathered together what the great reformer had more especially said upon the subject of preaching and of ministerial duties, in a work entitled "Pastorale Lutheri." Melancthon also wrote a work which had great reputation among the reformed churches, styled "De Officiis Concionatoris," of which one part is especially devoted to the *Formula de arte concionandi*, in which he sets forth the principles of classic eloquence in the form and composition of the sacred oration, with, however, some particular reference to the more practical needs of ecclesiastical and religious instruction. There are many other German works upon homiletics, dating back to the sixteenth century ; among which, perhaps, Erasmus' "Ecclesiastes" (of which mention has been already made) might be reckoned. After the falling away from the faith in the first half of the seventeenth

century and the dying out of the evangelic spirit of the pulpit, Spener (1635-1705) and the pietistic preachers, so-called, although they were somewhat narrow in their views respecting sound learning in the pulpit, revived its life and power for a while.

Eminent  
preachers.

Spener labored to abolish the formal *Perikopen* system of sermonizing and to introduce "free texts." He was distinguished for his plain, strong, and clear exposition of the Scriptures, and his warm devotional spirit. Following Spener in the simplicity of the gospel and in spirituality were Francke, an animated and almost vehement preacher; Anastasius Freylinghauser, more thoughtful and logical; Joachim Lange, and others, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. After the period of these pietistic divines came the chilling reign of the philosophical school, influenced greatly by the Wolffian rationalistic exegesis. In fact the Bible was little explained or referred to, though there were exceptionally scriptural preachers, even at this period. But a dry morality, professing to free the mind from its bondage by philosophy, prevailed. In the middle of the eighteenth century Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1694-1755) furnished the most eminent example of classic, able, well-methodized preaching that was still inspired by the truth and spirit of the gospel. He also wrote the "History of Christian Homiletics." Then appeared such distinguished pulpit orators as Cramer, Herder, Zollikoffer, Bretschneider, and Reinhard, the court preacher at Dresden, who wrote much and ably upon the art of preaching; until we draw nearer the present day, and we have the illustrious names of Krummacher, Dräseke (whom Hagenbach reckoned among the first pulpit orators of Germany), Claus Harms (warm and pathetic, and somewhat humoristic), Schleiermacher, Nitzsch, Heubner,

Hagenbach, Julius Müller, Hofacker, Rudolph Stier, Beck, Theremin, Schweitzer, and Tholuck.

The German mind, from the earlier times until now, with all its intellectual ponderousness and thoroughness, is distinguished by its power of sympathy, by a rich play of the sensibilities; and this is shown in a marked manner in German preaching, in which the morally genial and thoroughly humanistic element is prominent.

**Character-  
istics of  
German  
preaching.**

Herder, for example, though the peer of the great literary men of his times, and the theological father of such men as Hase, Bunsen, Rothe, manifested this. If he had had more of the strictly evangelic element he would have been still more effective. The German pulpit is not so polished, oratorically, as the French pulpit, but its style is more homely and hearty, and has more of fresh, robust thought. The German sermon, as a general rule, is freely expository rather than severely didactic, although there are exceptions, as in the case of Reinhard; indeed, some writers have accused it of wanting body or theological substance. It gives free play to æsthetic and poetic sentiment, sometimes causing the stern old Protestant cathedral fairly to blossom as with spring flowers. In its plan it is simpler than the Puritan discourse, making, in fact, but two grand elements to the sermon—the text and the disposition. But in the pulpit discourses of a preacher like Julius Müller there is a predominance of the theological and dialectic element; and in Schleiermacher there is more of the German subjectivity than is usual; but even in his most philosophical preaching Schleiermacher sought by his own spiritual sympathy to develop the Christian consciousness in his hearers, and to bring them into inner accord with Christ. He sought for the spirit of things, and cared not so much, perhaps



not enough, for dogmatic expression. As the greatest modern preacher of Germany we would endeavor rapidly to delineate him, and also, as a complement of him and existing because of him—though intellectually inferior—the late Dr. Tholuck. In regard to the outward facts and circumstances of these lives we draw them directly from German sources.

Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher, born at Breslau in 1768, was the son of a clergyman of the Reformed Church, a man of stern piety, who reared him in the precepts of the strictest orthodox sect.

He was early sent to the Moravian institution at Niesky. Here by the narrowness of the religious tenets inculcated he was driven into doubt, and into a most harrowing controversy with his father upon the subject of his Christian faith, although the affectionate and earnest type of religion exhibited by the Moravian brotherhood made a healthful and lasting impression upon his mind. In 1787 he went as a student to Halle, and at the end of his academic course acted for a while as lecturer in that university. Having recovered in a measure his faith, he became assistant preacher at Langsberg-on-the-Warthe, and after two years removed to Berlin. Here he formed the friendship of Friedrich Schlegel, Scharnhorst, Alexander Dohna, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and other leading minds. He now preached constantly, and his discourses upon religion (*Reden über die Religion*), and Monologues (*Monologen*), by their extraordinary philosophic and spiritual depth brought him into notice. Appointed regular preacher in Berlin he published other discourses of a profound character, and also his translation of Plato's works with a commentary, so that from his Platonic studies and the idealistic cast of his philosophy, he has been called "the Plato of Ger-

Schleier-  
macher.

many." In 1804 he was named University Preacher and Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Halle. During the period of the "War of the Liberation," being broken up at Halle, he returned to Berlin and became the centre of patriotic influence in those troubled times when all seemed failing and falling; so that a German writer says of him, "That small, insignificant-looking man became the soul of the warlike activity of Berlin." His eloquent "Christmas Festival discourse" (*Die Weihnachtsfeier*), breathing the soul of a thorough German patriotism which sprang from a deep-grounded Protestant faith, roused Germany like Luther's discourses to the German people of old. It was the speech of a man who, suffering intensely with all the woes of his fatherland, could become her counsellor and mouthpiece. In 1809 he was appointed pastor of Trinity Church, Berlin; and, soon after, in harmony with his own efforts and views, the University of Berlin was re-instituted, of which he became the most renowned light. His last great work was "The Christian Faith systematically presented according to the Fundamental Propositions of the Evangelical Church" (*Der Christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der Evan. Kirche in Zusammenhange dargestellt*).

Six series of his sermons (*Predigten*) have been published, the first in 1801, and the last in 1833. He died at Berlin, February, 1834.

Schleiermacher's style as a preacher was without much ornament, but, at the same time, it had a classic finish,

<p><b>Style and characteris-</b> <b>tics as a</b> <b>preacher.</b></p>	<p>an onward movement, and an original and vigorous thought that held his hearers spell-bound. He was a man who brought into his preaching the results of great erudition and profound thinking, and yet he strove to distinguish the true elements of Christian faith from the dogmatic</p>
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forms which had grown up around it and obscured its life. He sought for the springs of Christian faith in the real union of the soul with God. In this God-consciousness (*Gott-Bewusstsein*) he placed the source of religion. Christ revealed the true God-consciousness. He knew of no Christianity that was without Christ ; and even as his own pure life welled forth from that fountain of innermost personal union with the personal Christ, so he thought that the life of all believers, and of the Christian Church, should and could only spring from the same source.

Schleiermacher has wrought a profoundly shaping influence upon the new and more truly evangelical views which have sprung up in Germany regarding the immediate relation of Christian faith to Christian life. Such writers and preachers as, first of all, Neander, after him, Twisten, Nitzsch, Jul. Müller, Dorner, Martensen, Lücke, Tholuck ; and those of other lands, like Vinet, Archdeacon Hare, Maurice, F. W. Robertson, and Horace Bushnell, have drunk deeply, if sometimes unconsciously, into the thinking and theology of Schleiermacher. His was a large and hospitable theology that brought into it all there was revealed of God in the human mind, in nature, in science, in art, in literature, in the State and the household. Schleiermacher fairly turned the tide of rationalism in Germany. He discovered in his own consciousness of humanity the need of the soul to be perfect, and that this want could not possibly be met in the human soul itself by reason of its moral imperfection, and this was the death-blow of rationalism. He also discovered the truth that in Jesus there was a perfect and holy humanity upon which to rest this mediatorship between the sinful soul and a holy God. He was firm amid the confusing voices of his doubting age in his faith of

the unassailable holiness of the human nature of Christ. If temptation had but one slightest point of contact whereby to assail the character of the Saviour, he would have been no longer the Saviour of humanity. Yet it must be admitted that Schleiermacher built his theology too exclusively upon consciousness, upon this purely subjective basis, and that there was not enough in it of the positive element of revealed truth to make it a firmly reliable system for other men ; yet he probably did more than any other man to reconcile philosophy and faith, and to show that the objective truth of Christianity harmonized with the absolute needs of the soul. His theology went far to meet the deepest questions of man's own nature.

It is here, as a preacher, that he is worthy of profound study. Preaching is not only a means whereby to illumine the mind by divine truth, but to vitalize the soul by the touch of the divine spirit. It must penetrate deeper than the reasoning faculty to the springs of motive and life. It may be great as a didactic performance, and may leave the mind thrilling like a harp over which a master-hand has swept, but the vibrations die away in silence and apathy. The soul still sleeps the sleep of death. The preacher must come nearer than by the hand of power, and must open the fountains of long sealed-up affections. This constitutes pulpit genius. There are hundreds of intellectual discourses to one that is truly spiritual. One hears sermons that reverberate like thunder-peals through the vestibule of the mind, but do not speak to the inner man of the heart with the renewing voice of Christ. They do not speak with the sweet penetrative power of the Gospels. It is not given to all preachers to touch the heart. Not all are successors of the apostles in spiritual gifts. Hence they are almost



powerless for good. Though they have other gifts of power, the vital thing is wanting. It would be hard to say of such men (what often might be said of the best of us) that they do not feel what they say, or that they have no feeling, but somehow that gift has been denied them, and the golden key to hearts is not theirs. They are rhetoricians and logicians. The subtle instinct of love which the most hardened soul instantly perceives, and which inspires what is said with the pathos of sympathy, and enters the secret parts of the soul with a compelling force like a message of heaven, and raises the dead to life, is a precious gift in a preacher; and theological seminaries have a responsibility in this, that while they train men as exegetes, theologians, and writers, they do not destroy in the preachers they send forth the power of feeling the truth they utter, the power of loving men, the power of simple unconscious sympathy, and "freeze the genial currents of the soul." Churches, too, have a responsibility not to select men to fill their pulpits solely for their disciplined powers of intellect (none could rate the importance of these higher than we do), but also and perhaps mainly for their power with human hearts, their genius of sympathy, of Christlike persuasiveness, of true spirituality. If an individual preacher do not possess these qualities, it should be with him a matter of the most earnest striving—a matter of life and death—by prayer, by charitable activity among men, by humiliation and imitation of Christ, by pressing into closer and closer union with the spirit of the loving and crucified Lord, to win this divine sympathy, this love, or charity, which the apostle declares is the great end as well as means of Christian working, struggling, preaching, and living. Christianity, as Coleridge says, consists not only of ideas but of facts; and as ideas are the cor-

relatives of doctrines, so facts are the correspondents of feelings. If God first loved me I should love him first of all. If Christ, from love, died for me, this should awaken in me a lively sympathy for every sinful human heart upon which the gracious power of Christ can work. The unity of man, not only from nature, but from Christ's human nature, was a prime principle in Schleiermacher's creed. All the nature, too—the intellect, will, and affections—were comprehended in his conception of theology and preaching. The whole man was to be regenerated, but the spiritual man—the man of the heart—was the man whom, above all, he addressed ; for therein consisted the reality of the gospel as addressing itself to that part of the nature in which was contained its essential unity. The gospel which he preached was a spiritual gospel which penetrated to the secret faith, or real love, of the heart, and purified the inner sources of action and character. He laid special stress upon the spirit of the Christian believer, the new regenerate affection which goes underneath acts, and is the product of a genuine union with Christ, and which is seen in the warm, pure, inner life of the soul that makes it one with Christ's life, and with that of all other believers. While a great intellect, while purely rationalistic in some of his views, he placed the hidden source of religion in the spiritual affection more than in the scientific apprehension.

Another striking feature of Schleiermacher's preaching was the spirit of union, of true brotherhood in Christ which he cherished. He sought ever to find and develop in the congregation this sense of brotherhood, of union in Christ through faith in him as the Head. The Church was the sphere where the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of Christ, enabled this consciousness of God, and life in him, to be manifested freely. He had a most earnest

longing toward union and common love among believers ; that there might be even no marked distinction made, as in the past, between preacher and people, but that they all might be brought into the communion of the same spirit and life. He called the true preacher " the mouth of the congregation." He would have the teaching and authoritative idea of the preacher to be lost sight of in the higher idea of his being the instrument to express the will, the thought, the spirit, and the love of the whole body of the people and Church of Christ.

Schleiermacher was a philosopher ; and the influence of his philosophical studies, as well as of his comprehensive philological and classical culture, was seen in his sermons ; but he warned his pupils and hearers of the difference between knowledge and faith, and that the mathematical could not be mixed with the religious reason.

**Difference  
between  
faith and  
dogma.**

His faith did not dwell in the dry region of human science (*γνῶσις*), but it sought something more vital and profound in the inward teachings of the Word and Spirit of Christ (*πίστις*). He opened his heart freely to these. He abode in the love of Christ as well as in the love of human Christian friends. All the impulses of his being sought for sympathy, and his religious life would soon have perished in the exclusive pursuit of the technical science of speculative theology ; it strove after a more permanent nourishment in the moral and spiritual affections brought in union with Christ, the Lord of life. He was indeed almost the first Christian theologian who developed the ethical side of Christianity in its harmonious breadth and freeness ; and, after all, amid the scientific, materialistic, and pessimistic doubts through which the struggling Christianity of the present day is called to pass, and in which the faith of many grows faint and is

almost ready to vanish away, is there not an immovable standing-ground in the ethical and spiritual position upon which Schleiermacher's theology based itself?

His sermons thus, though intensely subjective in their currents, were not mere expressions of thought, and as-

Form of  
sermons—  
[extempore  
preacher.

suredly not mere bookish and literary discourses, but were full of the warm life of the soul. They were poured forth from the depths of a great, loving, religious nature.

They were rarely written out beforehand, but though carefully thought through and methodized, being synthetic and thematic in form, they were extemporaneously delivered. Schleiermacher was an *extemporaneous* preacher. His thoughts did not freeze into ice-cakes as if to be weighed and delivered from a vehicle, like those of many preachers who adopt the written method, but they had the direct and spontaneous flow of fresh currents of thought and feeling. We would not lose the opportunity to enforce by the example of a great preacher, this needed reform in our modern pulpit, whereby it may be made equal in popular power to the bar and the platform. Never will it attain its highest influence with the great masses of the people until it is emancipated from the tyranny of the written method, and men who have a living message from God can deliver it like God's prophets freshly and freely to the hearts of living men. But Schleiermacher did not trust to the moment for his real thinking, or even his ordering of the discourse, but he said in his counsels on this point: "Before going into the pulpit, the sermon as a whole—that is, the separate thoughts in their relations to all the members and the whole—should be clearly in the mind."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hagenbach's "Hom. and Lit.," p. 137.



Hence his discourses united in a wonderful degree the clearest thinking with the freest and most vital form of expression. Having seized the idea in its fullest conception, nothing of its luminous beauty and completeness was lost in giving it outward shape and language. He illustrated in a striking manner Quintilian's conception of extemporaneous oratory: "*Extemporalis oratio nec alio mihi videtur mentis vigore constare.*"

While Schleiermacher lived in the pure ideas of beauty and truth, and possessed to an exquisite degree the feeling of whatever was true, good, and beautiful, he had a most comprehensive and virile intellect that sought for the moral elevation of his hearers, for the greatest good of men and the State, and for the eternal interests of the human race. It cannot be denied that he leaned strongly to the philosophy of Spinoza, or, more correctly, of Schelling—the philosophy of the absolute; though to call Schleiermacher a pantheist is as false as to say that such expressions as "For me to live is Christ," "Yet not I but Christ who liveth in me," would prove that the apostle Paul was a pantheist; but it is patent that on the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement, he has given speculative explanations which differ widely from current orthodoxy. One writer states his position in a few discriminating words: "Schleiermacher knew the experiences of the religious life of the Christian, and he felt a powerful reality in them. In many of his speculations he coincided with Fichte, but feeling with him was a stronger reality than speculation. He believed that philosophy is yet far from attaining its true end; and he drew himself back from it, and retired into the province of Christian experience. This experience he vindicated in his systematic theology with the aid of a fine-drawn and

As a  
theologian.

eloquent system of dialectics. On the other hand, the rationalistic tendencies of the day in which Schleiermacher commenced his labors, the style of criticism that then prevailed, his own philosophical studies also, particularly his study of Spinoza, undermined his faith in many points of the orthodoxy that has ever been prevalent in the Church. Hence it is that he defended the great doctrines of Christianity, and at the same time abandoned many portions of truth, many parts especially of the historical revelation." For these reasons doubtless he is to be studied with caution. He was a great freethinker in the best sense of the term. But he is not to be judged rashly. In some respects he was more evangelical than many in his time, and many now, who claim to be orthodox; for he preserved the essential thing—the life and spirit of Christianity. The centre of his system is Christ; is the gospel; is the redemption wrought by the life, death, and Spirit of the Son of God; and he, probably more than any other one mind, has brought back modern theology from the rationalistic to the Christian standpoint, and held it there firmly, and more and more will continue to hold it there. He, like our own Bushnell—though they could not otherwise be compared—had great penetrating thoughts of God, which still are influencing men and all Christian thought and life. He cannot, any more than Bushnell, be put into a theological school-closet. He not only regarded himself as being in God, but as God being in him, working in him, loving him, being joined to him in Christ, and moulding him spiritually into the perfection of Christ, who was human as well as divine. The amazing and all-comprehending truth of the Incarnation—of divine life brought into humanity, and, above all, into the purified soul of the believer through the Son of man—was the main truth with him.

We are just beginning to feel the strong tides of his influence in this country, and our Puritan theology is destined to be modified by him much more than it has yet been. He was, in his day, as he said in noble consciousness of himself, "the organ, the mouthpiece of many loving and profound Christian natures, the turning-point of the thoughts and feelings, the joys and sorrows, the doubts and hopes of many noble and pure souls;" and this office he still in some sense fulfils, and in an ever-widening power. Thus he moved men, his country, and his age. It has been said of him, that as the German poet Arndt sought to awaken the German sentiment of nationality in a depressed and downtrodden land, and as Fichte sought to erect again the German reason, so Schleiermacher spoke to the German religious life—to the deepest soul of the German people—to their conception of and hold upon God and divine things. As he was a prophet to the people in the time of their greatest sorrow, need, and fear, so should every true preacher of Christ be, and may be, because the love wherewith Christ loves him is in him, because he has that divine sympathy which is ever ready to console and to suffer with men.

We have dwelt so long upon Schleiermacher that we have but few words for Tholuck, who was, nevertheless, as a preacher, in some respects, a better or more practicable model than Schleiermacher.

Friedrich August Gottreu Tholuck was born March 30th, 1799, in Breslau, the birthplace of Schleiermacher. He was the son of a goldsmith, and was destined to be himself a goldsmith, but his  
Tholuck.  
 brightness and love of knowledge caused him to be sent from the gymnasium of his native place to Berlin to study the Oriental languages, and through his enthusiasm for these studies he is said at that time to have been as much

a Mohammedan as a Christian. He made great proficiency in linguistic pursuits, and became also at this time an ardent believer ; so that from his promise as a scholar and his earnestness as a Christian he began to be regarded by the leaders of the evangelical party at Berlin, such as Neander and Hengstenberg, as an important ally to their cause ; and he was appointed Extraordinary Professor of Theology at Berlin University. He wrote a reply to DeWette on a subject connected with the dominant scepticism then in Germany, and was transferred to Halle, where, in 1826, he was named Ordinary Professor of Theology, for the avowed purpose of combating the Leibnitz-Wolffian form of rationalism then and there prevailing, whose leaders were Wegscheider and Gesenius. For fifty years he sustained an active conflict in support of evangelical views, and lived to see a great change wrought in the religious opinion both of his own university and of all Germany. He was a fertile writer on theological subjects, though not taking the first rank as a scholar. One critic says of him : " His biblical, historical, and practical writings found a considerable circle of readers, for they are distinguished for richness of thought, learning, and sensibility. In spite of the numerous quotations from Christian and heathen authors, both old and new, they indeed lack true thoroughness ; in spite of their orthodox coloring they lack consistency ; in spite of their keenness they lack clearness. One seldom loses the feeling that the author fails to comprehend clearly what he means to express. And could this be well otherwise ? Theologian of compromise through and through, at the same time belonging to the Romantic and sceptical schools, Tholuck had in fact wonderful receptivity for everything, but no clear, consistent standpoint. As a preacher in the philosophical mantle



of Schleiermacher he still could be claimed by the various schools of theology, while he belonged in substance to none of them wholly." Tholuck died at Halle in the summer of 1877.

As a preacher, Tholuck perhaps wrought his greatest influence. There was a free and almost torrent-flow of emotional thought in his sermons—of thought inspired by an evangelic spirit. He often exhibited an impassioned eloquence which bore the minds and hearts of his hearers along with it. "While," says Professor Park, "he would be called a memoriter preacher, yet he borrowed so much aid from the extemporaneous method that it is not always easy to classify him. He would dictate to his amanuensis a sermon on one Sabbath morning between five and seven o'clock; review the sermon at the same hours on the next Sabbath morning, and deliver it at nine o'clock on that very morning. His tenacious memory grasped and held a large part of what he had written, but his sentences as they were uttered received a new wealth of beauty from his rich imagination."<sup>1</sup>

Although a man of varied learning, Tholuck's sermons, like other German sermons, are simple without show of erudition, and though not without interesting thought, are mainly addressed to the heart rather than the head. As most of his sermons were preached to university students, they are stamped with that free, fresh style adapted to impress young men. There is nothing drily scholastic in their method or substance. They are living forms of thought. They are shot through with feeling as if caught from the light of that cross which he loved to hold up before the eyes of men, and especially of those who were accounted wise.

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<sup>1</sup> "Bib. Sac.," vol. xxix. p. 377.

He also exhibited a sagaciousness, a hard, shrewd knowledge of human nature, which is wonderful in a man devoted so exclusively to scholarly pursuits. The main traits of his preaching, we should say, were individuality, boldness mixed with kindness, dramatic power of the imagination, a pointed and homely style of thought, and a truly evangelic feeling that interfused all, and entered into the core and inmost meaning of the gospel. There are now and then sentences in his sermons which take us into the heart of spiritual truth, and we find ourselves making a stand upon them, revolving them and incorporating them into our own thinking, and almost unconsciously adopting them as principles to regulate our modes of belief. Were it not indeed well for us to infuse something of the spiritual life, and of the heart-glow of Schleiermacher, Tholuck, and the best German preachers from Tauler and Luther down to Palmer of Tübingen, Dorner of Berlin, Kahnis and Luthardt of Leipsic, and a hundred others, where, at the same time, there is no want of vigorous thinking—into our more cold, formal, and rationalistic methods of preaching? Yet we are of the opinion that we should not wholly adopt the German style of sermonizing, and lose sight of the best distinctive traits of the New England pulpit—its nobly thoughtful method and its profound grasp of principles.

The French pulpit is classic and brilliant. Its most eloquent Protestant representative was Jacques Saurin.

**The French  
pulpit—  
Saurin.**

Saurin was born 1677, and died 1730. His professional life was mostly spent in Holland, at the Hague. Although he adorned the Protestant pulpit with more of grace than it had before, he sincerely aimed at the great end of preaching—the spiritual welfare of men. He therefore stands higher as an evangelical preacher, though not as an ora-

tor, than most of the great Catholic French preachers. He was one of the first Protestant preachers who introduced into the plain didactic method of the Reformed pulpit the ornaments of eloquence. His chief productions are his sermons. These sermons have an elaborate method, and are built on the plan of a classic oration ; indeed, he rarely puts off his oratorical robes. His "introductions" are often highly wrought, and he follows the strictly logical or forensic method in the development. He concentrates all the elements of the text in a common subject or proposition, and preaches topically. His style is clear, shining, energetic, at times almost harsh, and deficient in pathos and unction. He introduces his ideas in a formal way by the law of progression rather than of natural development. Sometimes his whole plan consists merely of a number of remarks arranged numerically, without much regard to the logical evolution of thought. His sermons are full of eloquent thoughts. There are animated dialogues introduced—dialogues between the preacher and God, and between the preacher and his flock, so that his pulpit address attracted crowds by its liveliness ; and his reputation was at one time so great that a number of imitators arose, who carried his impassioned style to an extreme. He addressed the passions rather than the will and the affections. He delivered almost an entire system of theology, or body of divinity, in the course of his preaching ; and, while undoubtedly orthodox, was still more liberal than his contemporaries in his theological views. Though he employed metaphysics, he did not do so profoundly, and he did not always get at the root of things divine. Although he felt strongly what he said, he was essentially a "book-man" in his style, and he painted, by a sort of intellectual insight, man rather than men. He did not so well know

men. There is, however, considerable variety in his preaching, and he entered the field of Christian ethics more boldly than his predecessor ; but he was, more than all, and in spite of all, a true preacher of the gospel. Abbadie, another French preacher of celebrity, on one occasion said of him : " It is an angel and not a man who speaks." Nevertheless Saurin is perhaps a little too much of an eloquent declaimer built on the plan of a classic orator, with too abstract and polished a style to be the highest model of a Christian preacher, who speaks the language of common life, the language of the Bible, and of that spiritual truth that reaches both the understanding and the hearts of plain men. He dealt too much in the general, and not enough in the concrete. He could speak of the avarice of Judas till he thrilled the souls of his hearers, but it was the effect of the orator rather than the preacher. Still, as a faithful preacher of evangelical truth, he was, as has been said, superior to the French Roman Catholic orators.

We usually think of the French pulpit in connection with the brilliant and world-famous names of the great Roman Catholic preachers ; but there was also a class of noble French contemporaneous Protestant preachers who are too often overlooked.

As this is rather a neglected period of French homiletical history, we will speak more fully of these Reformed French preachers of the seventeenth century, selecting one of the greatest of them (not the most eloquent, since Saurin was probably that) as an illustration.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> What follows upon this particular period is in the main derived from Vinet's " Histoire de la Prédication de l'Église Reformée de France."



The greatness of Protestantism is one of the principal features of the greatness of the seventeenth century. This is true even in France, where Protestantism was proscribed.

At a later day this could be forgotten ; but the contemporary Roman Catholic orators, like Bossuet and Bourdaloue, did not speak but with respect, even if hostilely, of the French Protestant Church and its ministers.

There was at this time in the Protestant Church a number of great theologians, great controversialists, and above all great Christians. A part of the strength of Catholicism itself in this age must be imputed to Protestantism. Catholicism had arrived at that point when all Europe was falling into the abyss of impiety ; and the Romish priesthood, so far from restraining was precipitating it. The Romish Church, by holding to its traditions instead of preserving anything, only hastened its own destruction ; the progress of light and learning widened the breach ; and had there been no Luther and Calvin, the papacy would have succumbed under the thrusts of such merciless foes as Rabelais and Montaigne. The Reformation was the saving of Christianity, whether Protestant or Catholic.

The most conspicuous preaching talents, it is true, were found among the Catholics ; but in the main the Protestant Church was weightier than its rival. The superiority of one age is not in the marked pre-eminence of isolated individuals, any more than the prosperity of a country consists in the wealth of certain men. Catholicism, notwithstanding its great names, had really fewer able preachers than Protestantism. On the whole, the reformed preaching of the seventeenth century in France is remarkable.

Moral and  
historical  
characteristics  
of this period.

But the literary inferiority of the Protestant ministers is very evident. Even before they went into exile they had the style of exiles ; and the reformed preachers who wrote and spoke in France were wanting in a fine appreciation of their own language. One reason of this is that they were not in such propitious circumstances as their rivals to form their taste ; they were not, as it were, in the focus of good language, in the light of the court. The Protestant Church was a republic by itself, with its own habits, tradition, and even language—a language grave and simple, as was befitting a persecuted church. Its preachers followed the counsel of D'Aubigné : “ Let us make our style of writing respected.” This is better than beauty ; but it must be confessed that beauty was wanting. Bossuet said of Calvin, as has already been quoted, “ *Son style est triste.*” He could have said the same of most of the reformed preachers of France. But Calvin is sometimes eloquent, and they are not so always. Their gravity is bare, stripped of all the flowers of the imagination ; nothing in their situation, nothing in their past or their future was calculated to enliven their style.

Another cause of their inferiority is that they were unable to avoid controversy and the consequent abuse of the dogmatic element. Men of combat, they carried into the pulpit the dust of the arena. Theology, in their sermonizing, bore hard on religion, and the practical application of their discourses is often slurred over. Doubtless dogma is the foundation of moral truth ; but for all that, too much of the dogmatic can hardly be reconciled with much spirituality. It must be also added that the abounding of the moral element in the whole substance of preaching is an essential condition of eloquence. In this respect the Catholics were, perhaps, in a more favor-

able position : they did not have to establish the dogma anew for their own Church, and as it was for their interest to cause Protestants and their doctrines to be forgotten, they avoided theological controversy as much as possible ; having to dogmatize less, they moralized more, and their whole preaching gained by it.

That which redeems the fault which we have noticed in Protestant preaching is the purity and solidity of the doctrinal teaching ; it is identical in the main with that which we call Puritan the-  
Doctrinal  
teaching.  
 ology, though differing from it in some respects. The French reformed preachers of the seventeenth century laid their foundations solidly ; the English Puritans aimed vigorously for immediate results ; the first had more regard to the life and foundations of the Church ; the last aimed more at the salvation of the individual. One feature which characterized the reformed preachers of the seventeenth century, not only those who remained in the Roman Catholic Church, but their successors in the Reformation, is their biblical character. Their sermons are often nothing more than an extended exegesis of the text ; they spell it out, syllable by syllable, word by word ; they press it ; they almost wring it ; this is ordinarily all their plan. There is little invention, but there is a judicious and exact analysis, though carried to an extreme.

Their preaching is, however, superior to that of their successors in regard to its texture, its solidity, its correctness, and its knowledge. It addressed auditories difficult to satisfy—auditories of theologians, sometimes of martyrs. It was “the church in the desert,” as it was aptly called. What force there was needed in the flocks themselves to support such a style of preaching ! But they doubtless more than supported it ; they loved it.

For to this height a whole church was elevated. Those merchants, those artisans, studied their religion with the greatest care.

In these reformed preachers, notwithstanding their literary inferiority, a genuine respect for learning is also

**Respect for learning.**      apparent, which has been sometimes erroneously thought to be incompatible with high

pastoral fidelity. They recognized in learning a means, a power, and also a fitness. One of them was deposed solely on account of his culpable ignorance of good letters. Some of them even carried their cultivation in this respect farther than would be imagined ; thus Le Faucheur, the most vehement of all, composed " A Treatise on the Action of the Orator," which is evidently the fruit of thorough classical studies. These ministers were, in other respects, among the most intelligent men of their day ; they wished at least to be equal to the best educated of their congregations.

Through all the differences which separate them from the Roman Catholics and distinguish them among themselves, a common character is everywhere seen—it is the French genius, the French style ; the direct march, the method, the clearness. It is not that which makes them great, but without that they could not be so great. They all have, also, more or less of what the French call "*l'esprit*."

The study of these old preachers not only affords us an historical interest, but they furnish us also good models. One may read many of them even now for edification, and, excepting their archaic language, he will find them little touched by age. In the purity and solidity of their doctrine they have something fresh, while the preachers who come an age later present in their sermons a faded foliage and a worn-out doctrine.



The first really appear to us to be younger, and in reality they were so ; they are less antiquated even than the great models of the Roman Catholic pulpit. If they have not, like them, the advantages of form, they have not the disadvantages ; for the form is something temporary, while the substance of truth is eternal. The reformed preachers were not fashionable in their day, and that is partly the reason why they are not superannuated now. The oldest of them all, Du Moulin, is he who appears the youngest.

What has thus far been said applies essentially to the preachers of the first half of the seventeenth century. The literary influence and culture of the succeeding last half of the century made itself more felt upon their successors. The preachers of the first period, which extends from Du Moulin to Claude, exclusively, is distinguished, according to Vinet, by three characteristics : 1. The analytical system of their sermons ; 2. The brief place occupied by the moral element ; 3. The almost total absence of the literary and even oratorical element.

When we come to the second period of the reformed preaching of the seventeenth century the transition is so gradual that we could quite as well say that its greatest preachers, like Claude, for example, terminate the first period. Yet one perceives in Claude's sermons the first symptoms of the homiletical revolution that then took place. Analysis becomes synthesis. It was very much like the history of preaching in the early centuries. Until that time the expository method had prevailed—an exposition easy, and followed ordinarily by a simple expansion of the text. There was an effort, doubtless, to unite different parts, and to give them a final direction, but this effort was not very strenuous. From this to the sermon, ordinarily

The second  
period.

so called, which grasps an idea in the text, there is a great distance filled by intermediate examples. Claude does not separate himself from the ancient method, he only modifies it. In this conciliation which was then attempted there was a desire above all to give a faithful, solid, and detailed explication of the text, but at the same time to develop an idea which should become the subject of the discourse. The attempt was difficult, and was hardly to be accomplished without doing some injury to that simplicity of attraction which should belong to the Christian pulpit. The Protestant preachers have not always avoided the danger of the method that they have chosen; and they have often been led to wrest either their mind or their text. This, however, is better than the method of the Catholic orators, who scorn the text and do not make use of it.

Another character of the sermons of this second period is, that controversy occupies a less and less prominent place. We will now speak more particularly of one great man as being, perhaps, the best exponent of this period.

Jean  
Claude.

Jean Claude was the most eminent Frenchman of the Reformed Church of his time; the Roman Catholics called him "the famous minister Claude." He was born in 1619 at Sauvetat, in the Rouergue, where his father was minister. It was under his father's direction, who was a man of great knowledge, that he carried on his studies, even those of theology, although he desired to go to Saumur, where he was attracted by the polish of manners and language prevailing there. After his consecration he became pastor of the little church of "*Sainte Afrique*," in the South, where he could devote a great part of his time to study. Called to be pastor at Nîmes in 1654, he also taught theology there with success.

He presided at the provincial synod of Nismes in 1661, and there opposed the projects of reunion with the State Church, which concealed views of direct oppression of religious freedom. It was desired by the originators of this plan of union, on the one hand to divide and on the other to diminish the moral power of a body whose only power was moral. Claude declared that the reformers could not consent to unite light with darkness, Christ with Belial; and, in spite of the opposition of the royal committee, he caused this declaration to be inserted in the protocol. In consequence of this bold opposition, his ministry in Languedoc was interdicted. He betook himself to Paris to protest, but could not succeed in removing the interdiction.

Then opened to Claude the career of controversy, in which he rendered such great service to his Church. Madame de Turenne besought him to refute a manuscript treatise which had been written for the view of converting the Maréchal. His reply was widely circulated before it was printed. His fame dates from that time.

He then refuted the book upon "*La Perpetuité de la foi sur l'Eucharistie*," in which Arnauld and Nicolo maintained that the dogma of the "real presence" had always been admitted by Christendom. The Jesuits themselves labored to spread the reply of Claude, as a weapon against the Jansenists.

Claude was named minister at Paris in 1666. From that time his influence was great in the councils of the reformers. He was the leader and soul of his party. He was placed in the front rank on all important occasions. The most celebrated is the conference or controversy that he held with Bossuet, at the invitation of a relative of Turenne, Mademoiselle de Duras. It is not easy to discover who really prevailed; but Bossuet himself said, in

speaking of Claude, in the preface of his own relation of the dispute, "He made me tremble for those who heard him."

At the revocation of the edict of Nantes (1685) he was distinguished in the general proscription. While it allowed to other ministers a delay of fifteen days to leave the kingdom, Claude was compelled to leave in twenty-four hours. He was everywhere on his journey overwhelmed with marks of respect, even on the part of Catholics. He retired to La Haye, where he continued to preach, though wholly occupied with other labors. He died at the end of eighteen months of exile.

Claude, in his style, belonged to that literary epoch which is called the age of Louis XIV. He has the pure taste of the great writers of that age, a classic language, and a horror of false brilliancy. In a passage from his first discourse on the "Parable of the Marriage Feast," he expresses his strong aversion to elaborate minuteness in sermonizing.

**Style and  
character as  
a preacher.**

"I will not stop here," he says, "to draw an impertinent parallelism composed of all the points of correspondence that might be discovered between a marriage feast and the gospel of the Saviour of the world, and much less will I weary myself to push to excess this figure of the 'marriage feast.' These allegorical and parallelistic methods, if I dared say so, are generally only bad efforts or evil, which do not please any one, and more than this, do not edify any one's conscience."

Claude, while attached as a matter of principle to the analytic or expository method, still inclines to the synthetic treatment; while he is faithful to the text, and spells it out, word by word, as did his predecessors, yet he is not satisfied with following it thus closely; he



seeks to bind it up in one or two ideas, and to recast it in the form of a subject ; in a word, he has a plan. This he announces ordinarily at the beginning of his sermon. Thus, in the second sermon of a series upon the parable of the wedding (Matt. 22 : 1-7), he begins in this wise : " You have come here, Christians, to learn two important truths : one, the corruption of man deprived of the aid of grace, and the other, what divine justice does when man abandons his duty. These are the two points to be treated. We have to see, first, what the guests did when the king sent his servants to call them ; secondly, we have to consider what happened to these guests."

Nothing like this is to be observed in any of his predecessors. And in the fifth sermon, more particularly upon the words, " Many are called, but few are chosen," he says : " This is, in truth, the conclusion our Lord draws from the whole of the parable, and this is the reason he gives why the Jews rejected his gospel, and why among the Gentiles who received it outwardly, there are found some who did not bring to his divine banquet the right dispositions of heart. To treat more distinctly so great a matter, we divide it into two parts. The first will be upon the calling and election considered in themselves what they are ; the second will have regard to their extent according to the limits given them by our text."

In other respects we do not find anything remarkable in Claude in his analysis of texts and subjects. He has not much invention, but is judicious and penetrating. What strikes us in him is his invariable good sense and elevation and firmness of spirit.

His style is terse, neat, and rapid ; each phrase, each word goes straight to the point, *ad euentum festinat*. He is distinguished also generally by an irreproachable correctness.

“ He did not view the public,” says the author of his posthumous works, “ with that proud security that we see in some authors, and he did not think himself so infallible as to be contented with his first thoughts. His principle was that he could not reflect enough on what he wrote, and when it was a question to come before all eyes, he could not present himself with too much honesty or wisdom. This obliged him to revise his works often, and to retouch them with severity.”

As to the quality of imagination, whether it be that which invents ideas or creates images, he has little of it ; but he has vigor and authority. He was naturally stern ; Benoit rightly calls him “ the inflexible Claude,” and he found too many occasions to show his stern inflexibility. At the epoch of the edict of Nantes the condition of the Reformed Church was desperate ; the Protestant character was weakened ; the whole Church was gradually sinking into a lethargy ; there were many apostasies of distinguished persons and of the rich.

Such a condition of things inspired Claude to utter words of terrible severity. These are not commonplaces either : his character, moderate and rather cold than passionate, as a guaranty that they were not also exaggerations, but a faithful portraiture of the moral condition of his auditors. In his reproofs he shows an apostolic boldness, without personal asperity, and sometimes rising to eloquence.

Thus, having spoken of the ruin of the people of Israel after the death of Jesus Christ, Claude addresses his audience in these terms : “ Let us learn, my brethren, from this great and terrible example, to know and fear divine justice ; and you, ye profane, be astonished. There is now no more any question of shifting and cavilling about the Christian religion ; the time has come to tremble at

the sight of the most fearful object that ever presented itself to human eye. When a disbeliever is alone in the quiet of his chamber, he can philosophize at his ease, and search out arguments to call in question the plainest things ; but when he is in the open field and sees the tempest burst around him, and the lightning strike tall trees and burn houses ; when he sees the earthquake-fire descend from heaven and leap up from the abyss beneath, and whole cities swallowed or consumed, then he has something else to do than to weave subtleties ; he is terrified, and feels, in spite of what he has said, the effect of what he does not wish to believe. And so it is with us now. If it were only a question of dogmas and mysteries, our courageous spirits could raise troubles and difficulties ; but if it is a question of a thunderbolt hurled from the mightiest hand in the universe ; if it is a question of an incurable wound, which bleeds and has bled for seventeen centuries ; if it is a question of a fire which smokes before our eyes and will smoke to the end of the world, who would not be afraid ? I avow that God has never displayed his judgments in so impressive a manner ; that he has never presented such occasions ; that the Son of God descends once more on earth to be personally crucified. The ruin of the Jews was a strange event, and hence Scripture presents it to us as an image of the last judgment and of the end of the world. But, while guarding the proportion of things, I say that God does not leave men's crimes unpunished, and, above all, those which outrage or bring into contempt his gospel ; and if we would open our eyes to see the ways of his providence, all the ages and even our own age will furnish us with remarkable examples. Learn then to fear, and knowing what is the terror of the Lord, suffer it at least to lead you to faith. While God keeps himself hid in the cloud

of his pity and of his long-suffering, and has, so to speak, his arms tied, you have no conception of his power, his anger, or his justice ; but know if you overcome his patience by your obduracy, the victory will cost you dear. Remember what God said to the wicked in the fiftieth Psalm, for after having set forth his sins, he adds : ‘ These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.’ It is true that God has placed our evil and our good, our punishment and our reward, as ideas of the future ; but what St. Paul has said for the consolation of the just, ‘ Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry,’ we can say with stronger reason in order to impress the wicked with terror ; if divine justice lingers, it will come, and will not tarry. In my opinion, one can say this with more emphasis in regard to the effects of his justice than of his goodness ; for there is nothing in the wicked but what hastens his justice, while God’s goodness finds in the most just persons a thousand reasons for delay.

“ But, one will say, why do you speak thus ? We, by the grace of God, are not wicked, nor profane, nor unbelieving persons ; we believe in Jesus Christ, and we have made profession of his gospel ! My brethren, I know that you profess to be Christians, and if the question were on condemning the act of the Jews, not one of you would undertake its defence. I am even persuaded that if there may be among us many profane and worldly men who make no account of religion, there are still many good souls who desire to win salvation ; and if this were not so God would not preserve to us as he has the ministry of his word. But do we not make ourselves every day unworthy of his grace by the great number of sins



that we commit, and by the small account that we make of his gospel? We are selfish and avaricious, hard and obstinate, unjust and violent, proud and arrogant, sensual and given to pleasure, envious, slanderous, malicious, implacable like all the rest of men; and how can we boast of our Christianity? It is for this reason that God has made us for a long time to hear his voice; he exhorts us, he admonishes us, he presses us, he solicits us, he chastises us, he bears with us, and still how few are the fruits that he has yet gathered from so great care? We have, then, just cause to fear that he will at length be angry at our negligence and ingratitude, and we have the more cause to fear in that, notwithstanding some threatenings which he has made against us, and which have already begun to be accomplished, there has been no amendment seen in our people." It should be remembered that this was spoken in the period of the persecution of the Huguenots, the revocation of the edict of Nantes, and the dragonnades of Louis XIV. It was a painful, perilous, and most solemn period for all who loved the truth in France.

We have spent upon this preacher and this epoch more time than was justifiable, and the only excuse is that it is new and noble ground for study. But there were also other preachers of marked power in that age, who belonged to the Protestant Church, such as Pierre du Moulin (already mentioned), Mos. Amyraud, Jean Daillé, Michel le Faucheur, Jean Mes-  
Other  
Protestant  
French  
preachers.  
 trezat, and Pierre du Bosc. Associated with these in lineal descent were those great French preachers of the eighteenth century who were driven to Holland by the edict of Nantes, of whom Jacques Saurin, whom we have before noticed, was one of the most eminent, such as Jean Basnage, Henri

Chatelain, Jacques Abbadie, Pierre Roques, called "Pasteur Evangelique." The first mentioned preachers who remained in France were pastors of the French Protestant Church in times of its distress and persecution, when it was "the church in the wilderness." They were, as has been said, apostolic men, true leaders and counsellors of the people.

The more widely known and celebrated French Roman Catholic divines are headed by Bossuet, "the eagle of Meaux." He was born in 1627 and died 1704, being almost the exact contemporary of Claude. He has not been unjustly compared to Demosthenes, though it must be said the comparison is one exclusively of French writers. His sermons abound in passages of grandeur and force. He caught something of the sublime style of the Hebrew prophets, who were his favorite study in youth. Indeed, however falsely he may have interpreted it, the Bible was the grand source of his inspiration as a preacher. His six *oraisons funèbres* are full of majesty of tone, and have a breadth and freedom of style beyond that of other French preachers. He despised the minute and fine-spun styles; but his faults also were great, having a tendency to stage effect, or to the false sublime, and to an imperious harshness and virulence of language. He was jealously attached to the orthodox doctrine, as held by the Catholic Church, attacking vindictively both the heresies of Luther and of Fénelon, the latter in the disgraceful controversy on "Quietism." He was devoted to his church rather than to the simplest and highest objects of preaching; but he was not wanting in faithfulness in boldly attacking the vices of the corrupt court of Louis XIV., resembling Dr. South, who was placed in somewhat

Eminent  
French  
Roman  
Catholic  
preachers—  
Bossuet.

similar circumstances, in this particular, though the comparison cannot be carried farther. He was a learned and brilliant orator of a brilliant age, but his fame in the future will never be so great as it was in the past. Although he was a defender of the rights of Gallicanism, he was, above all, the indomitable and untiring servant of the papacy, or, as he called himself, "*Bos suetus aratro.*" He was great from his own point of view. Whatever else he was or was not, he was the determined foe of Protestantism, and, with Massillon, Flechier, and other court chaplains, he hounded on Louis XIV. in his persecutions of the Huguenots and the reformed churches.

Massillon, probably a greater pulpit orator than Bossuet, though of a less brilliant style, was moderate and self-contained, even in his most fervid utterances; and this noticeable "*vis tem-*

**Massillon.**

*perata*" of Massillon is one chief source of his eloquence: it marks reserved force—a great quality in preaching. At times Massillon was vehemently impetuous. No recorded uninspired sermon ever probably made a greater immediate impression upon an audience than his sermon on "The small Number of the Elect." It reminds one of the scenes that occurred at the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. When he came to these words: "Withdraw now these four classes of sinners from this congregation, for they will be withdrawn from it at the great day. Stand forth now, ye righteous! Where are ye? Remnant of Israel, pass to the right! Wheat of Jesus Christ, separate yourselves from the chaff destined for the everlasting burning! Oh, God, where are thine elect!" hundreds rose up with agitation and despair painted on their countenances, and the preacher himself was obliged to stop, overcome with emotion.

Bourdaloue, by some considered the greatest of the

French preachers, had a dignified and serious style, devoid of florid ornament, plain, masculine, and direct. He drew largely from the fathers of the Church. He was called "*Le prédicateur des rois et le roi des prédicateurs.*" As one who set his face against the false taste of the Jesuit pulpit in his times, and was a reformer of pulpit style, bringing it back to something of its pristine soberness, reasonableness, and vigor, Bourdaloue is perhaps our best model among the great Roman Catholic preachers of his day. He has indeed been called the founder of modern pulpit eloquence among the French.

Fénélon, whose name cannot be mentioned but with admiration and affection by all who love Christ, united a polished but easy and natural style with profound spirituality and unction. The best mystical theology, that of self-abnegation and quietism—the theology of Thomas-à-Kempis—was exemplified in the writings and life of Fénélon.

The great modern French preachers, such as the brothers Monod, Coquerel father and son, Lacordaire, De Ravignan, Père Hyacinthe, Grandpierre, Bersier, De Pressensé, and, above all, Alexander Vinet, who may be reckoned a

French preacher, though he lived at Lausanne in Switzerland, are more familiar to us by name, though their sermons perhaps may be as unfamiliar to us as those of the older classic French preachers. The French are almost universally memoriter preachers, taking great pains to commit their sermons, and to speak them with grace, fluency, and fervor. Though often characterized by great spiritual fervor and *dévouement*, they confessedly aim at pulpit eloquence. They are, in a word, more complete classic orators than the German or English preachers, but with-



out the powerful individuality and depth of the preachers of the Teutonic race.

The English or British pulpit is excelled by none in great names. It is robust, practical, sober, direct ; though not without its highly speculative and mystical side, as seen in the group of **British pulpit.** English Platonic divines of the Puritan period like Nathaniel Culverwell, Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, ending, or perhaps degenerating into English Böhmenism and Quakerism, but comprehending some of the most lofty and spiritual minds of the age. English preaching really began with Wyclif, who sowed the fire-seed of earnest evangelical preaching which sprang up two centuries after him, though its greatest representatives lived in the seventeenth century, which was the golden age of the English pulpit, when the Puritan strength and fervor, caught from **Its Golden Age.** communion with the Holy Spirit, were still unadulterated. Even in the latter portion of the previous century, during the fires of the Reformation in Elizabeth's reign, the emancipation of the English mind showed itself in the new vigor and spiritual freedom of the pulpit ; and many devoted preachers of the pure gospel, like John Rogers, Henry Smith, Bernard Gilpin, were precursors of the more learned and eloquent of the Puritan divines of the next reigns, whose preaching was massive in philosophic thought, with a hard rind of controversial theology, but informed and instinct in every part with spiritual light and living energy—the age of John Howe, Baxter, Flavel, Calamy, Owen, Bates, Charnock, and their powerful compeers of the Church party, Hooker, Donne, Bishop Hall, South, Barrow, Jeremy Taylor, Leighton. Hooker and Donne, it is true, belong also to a somewhat earlier period, and they possess much of the

richness and power of the wonderful Elizabethan age of intellectual development. Old Fuller says of Hooker :

**Hooker.** "Mr. Hooker, his voice was low, stature little, gesture none at all, standing stone still in the pulpit as if the posture of his body were the emblem of his mind, immovable in his opinions. Where his eye was left fixed at the beginning it was found fixed at the end of his sermon ; in a word, the doctrine he delivered had nothing but itself to garnish it. His style was long and pithy, driving on a whole flock of several clauses before he came to the close of a sentence. So that, when the copiousness of his style met not with a proportionable capacity in his auditors, it was unjustly censured for perplexed, tedious, and obscure. His sermons followed the inclination of his studies, and were for the most part on controversies and deep points of school divinity."

In the other great preachers of this period there was a rich play of the imagination, and often true eloquence ; perhaps there are no passages of more rare and wonderful

eloquence to be found in the sermons of any preacher than in those of Dr. Donne ; but they are "purple patches" interwoven with a vast deal that is rhapsodical and feeble. Charnock is especially vigorous and masculine ; he is also perspicuous and often profound.

Of English sermonizers, whether of the older or the more modern school, Robert South is to be particularly

**South.** noticed. He was born in 1633, and in 1651 became a student of Christchurch, Oxford, obtaining the honor of University orator. After the Restoration he was made Chaplain in Ordinary to Charles II., and continued to be a staunch loyalist and unflinching and bigoted supporter of the English prelacy in

opposition to the Presbyterians and Puritans. He died in 1716. He belonged to the last half of the seventeenth century—to the stormy period of the English revolution, and of the conflict between the kingly and popular powers. It was the age of great men—of Cromwell, Milton, Bacon, Locke, Fuller, Cudworth, Stillingfleet, Owen, Howe, Baxter, Bunyan, Barrow, Taylor. South did not at all like the stricter Puritan school of preachers, and there is little of real spirituality in his sermons; but he is nevertheless a great ethical writer, not a dry dilectician, but ever keeping his feet on the facts of nature and experience. He lashes vice and the vice of his age with all the power of his unsparing wit and sarcasm. In the loose age of Charles II., Rochester, and Dryden, he stood boldly upon the rock of good morals. In thought he is powerful but irregular, being influenced in this respect by his passions, and resembling a volcano rather than a fruit-bearing mountain. He was a thoroughbred polemic, giving and taking blows without mercy. As a preacher few have excelled him in vigor of language, and as the master of a trenchant and forcible English style. Though rarely sublime, he is often eloquent. He is an excellent model of a sermonizer. His sermons always possess a distinct and indeed strongly marked logical plan, and his treatment of subjects is of the most thorough as well as copious kind. (See sermon on “Image of God in Man.”) There is always a body of substantial and solid reasoning in his discourses. But he is greater as a sermon-maker than as a genuine preacher of the gospel. He had more grit than grace. He had a serviceable and business-like, strong and picturesque style. There is often a homely force about it which is better than all the graces of rhetoric. He speaks of the gospel’s “setting fallen man on his legs again.” Discoursing of sceptics

he says, "Or can they imagine that the law of God will be baffled with a lie clothed in a scoff?" He exclaims, "Creation bends and cracks under the wrath of God." One cannot open South without finding some strong meat. He is not one of those who is the servant of his language, but language is his servant. He understood the power of the English language as well, perhaps, as any prose writer of English. He was quick at resemblances and objects of fresh illustration. His wit was pungent. He speaks of the peril of the modern infidel's becoming like the ancient idolater, in these words: "That he should at length come to fawn upon his own dog; bow himself before a cat; adore leeks and garlic, and shed penitential tears at the smell of a deified onion."

He preached out of his intense convictions, whether right or wrong, but he was strongly biassed by his prejudices, and is a noticeable example of a partisan or political preacher in the bad sense of the term. Nothing was so black as his opposers, nothing so white as his own party. He is more than usually virulent in his assaults upon Puritan worship and extemporaneous prayer; and he says of the Established Church of England that it is "the purest and most apostolically reformed church in the Christian world." He preached absolute subjection to princes and the divine right of kings; he calls Charles I. "a blessed saint, the justness of whose government left his subjects at a loss for an occasion to rebel; a father to his country, if but for this only that he was the father of such a son." He says there is but one prayer which is omitted in the English prayer-book, and that is that "the Book of Common Prayer should be the book of worship used in the whole world from that time and forever!"

But as the writer of an every-day nervous English style,



without false sentiment and false ornament, virile, direct, clear, incisive, and practical, we know no better model for the orator, whether at the bar or in the pulpit. If his fervor at times is earthly, and his eloquence Demosthenean rather than Pauline, this is the fault of the man more than of the style, for that has genuine individuality. It is hard for us to regard him with entire approbation or patience because he is so bigoted a foe of free government and a free church; but take him aside from his political prejudices, and we will find him to be a great moral reasoner and also a powerful apologist for the main doctrinal truths of Christianity in a highly infidelic and scoffing age.

A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* says of South: "His sermons are well worthy of frequent perusal by every young preacher." He is not so wordy and epithetic as Barrow, is more pointed than Howe, and is more practical and has better command of the imagination than Jeremy Taylor. He is also clearer in arrangement and freer from classicisms of style than are his eminent contemporaries. While there is a great mass of valuable matter, ethical and theological, in his sermons, he is chiefly to be studied for his incomparable English. His chief fault of style, perhaps, is his too frequent use of antithesis, which comes from his keen and uncontrollable wit. He is ever more interested in state religion than in the religion of the New Testament, and his works form a treasury of prelatical arguments; but, as has been said, when not pursued by this ecclesiastical demon he is an earnest preacher on moral and religious subjects.

Isaac Barrow was also a distinguished master of the moral-descriptive style of preaching, but  
Barrow.  
his language does not compare with South's  
for condensed vigor, and it is overloaded with adject-

tives and qualificatives even to verboseness. Barrow is also lengthy in his treatment of a subject. He has "the gift of continuousness." His sermons are in fact treatises on Christian themes and the Christian virtues, some of them being continuations of the same subject through five or six discourses, as his sermons on "Obedience to Spiritual Guides." They are better fitted in their present shape for reading in the study than for delivery from the pulpit, and they were felt to be so sometimes by the audiences of his day. Yet they have some marked qualities of power.

Jeremy Taylor cannot be judged of superficially ; for he is like a mountain or a whole terrestrial region bearing all manner of fruits. He affords illustrations of all kinds of style, of the best and the worst. There is sometimes a lack of the pure gospel in them ; but his sermons and writings, as examples of what Taine calls "the period of the Christian Renaissance in literature," are vast treasures of religious thought and even theology, though his works are better adapted for private meditation than for imitation in the pulpit. As one writer has said of him, "He is a preacher who comes in state to the soul"—not the best kind of preacher for all souls. To read him is like looking into a gorgeous sunset ; there is often a vagueness in the ideas, but it is a glorious illumination of the earth and heavens, an indescribable magnificence of imagery, through which his imagination shines like the sun ere it sinks into the ocean. He might have been born in the Orient and reared in a "garden of spices ;" nor would David and David's royal son have despised his companionship, nor failed to acknowledge the kinship of his genius.

But let us speak of him more circumstantially. Jeremy Taylor, son of a Cambridge barber, was born in 1613.

He entered Cambridge University when but a boy of thirteen, went through a brilliant seven years' course as a student, and at the age of twenty-one was admitted to holy orders. His precocious genius attracted the attention of Archbishop Laud, and obtained for him early preferment in the Church. His first publication was a defence of the Church under the title "Episcopacy Asserted." During the reign of Parliament he retired from public life and taught school, and also wrote many of his greatest works, such as "The Liberty of Prophesying," the "Life of Christ," "The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living," "The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying," and his famous "Doctor Dubitantium ; or, The Rule of Conscience in all her General Measures." He was made Bishop of Down and Connor in 1660, and died in 1667. His character is hard to analyze, and combines the rarest excellences with some marked defects. He uttered the profoundest as well as the most baseless things. He has risen to the sublimest heights of the imagination, and has given specimens also of decided bombast. As a reasoner he is at times remarkably clear, close, and cogent ; but at other times his imagination swayed his reason, and his figurative language led him into ambiguities of expression which seemed almost to amount to moral ambiguities. He often admits weak arguments, and mixes sound and unsound arguments, and thus impairs the strength of his reasoning ; but take him for all in all he was the most learned and brilliant, if not the most evangelical divine of his times, and almost of any time. He had both compass and subtlety of mind ; his theology was practical ; and as a moral reasoner he was, as a general rule, sound and strong, because, without question, he heartily loved truth and was a thoroughly good man, with a Christian spirit. He painted virtue and vice in their

beauty and deformity. But his regal imagination is his great glory as a writer, and in this he stands unsurpassed. There is no subject, not even the driest point of casuistry, that he does not adorn with grace and luxuriant imagery. His learning that ransacked antiquity did not seem for a moment to dampen the fire and splendor of his imagination. He loves ornament absolutely for ornament's sake, or because he is a poet in love with beauty. He plays with his fancies as if they were his children. His tropes run into metaphors, his metaphors into similes, his similes into apologues and allegories. His writing is like one broad "field of the cloth of gold." While thus his imagination is not oratorical but poetical, and to the utmost diffuse, his sermons, of which there are sixty-four, are notwithstanding the finest of his works—most full of thought and eloquence, of sound theology and beautiful Christian spirit. Yet he was too gentle, calm, and meditative for the greatest style of preacher, and lacked energy, earnestness, and directness. He is also somewhat vague in his devotional writings, and he does not bring forward with sufficient clearness the distinctive doctrines of the gospel. He is more practical, however, than metaphysical in his theology, and his views on religious toleration (which were not always carried out in his acts) were broad, and suited to any times. He was inclined to Pelagian and latitudinarian views; and there is, perhaps, although his sermons are pervaded by a Christian spirit, too little of the element of Christ as Intercessor, as the atoning Redeemer of men. He rests much on natural theology, and on arguments such as Cicero or Plato might have used. Indeed he is sometimes ranked with the school of the Cambridge Platonists, or mystics, of the seventeenth century.

In his use of language he is inclined to employ words



derived from the Greek and Latin, and also in their original senses, as "contortion" for bruise, "excellent" for exceeding, as "excellent pain." His style, beyond even the custom of his day, is studded with classical allusions and quotations. In the structure of his sentences, though they are long and complex, they are generally clear, the clauses being joined together by a simple conjunctive. He makes use of language with a masterly power, owning no rule but the exigency of his own fertile thought and brilliant imagination. He should be studied mainly as one of the great masters of English literature, and in this regard should be approached not in a flippant and critical but reverent spirit. His study is particularly useful to the preacher and student of theology on account of the unstinted richness of his thought and copiousness of his language upon religious themes; and also for his liturgical or devotional thought, in which, as on an eagle's wings, he soars past common bounds into the highest empyrean of praise and adoration.

Let no common preacher attempt to imitate Jeremy Taylor in his imagination, for too much ornament, despite its richness, makes a cold style. But a preacher's imagination, if he have any, may be touched and set on fire by the exceeding brilliancy of this poet-preacher of old England's greatest period of great divines.

Of the Presbyterian and Puritan divines of this same epoch the most celebrated are John Bunyan, Richard Baxter, John Owen, and John Howe. We will say a few words of Howe, Baxter, and Bunyan, the three decidedly the superior in original genius; for Owen, though learned and weighty as a writer, was, as a preacher, prolix and ponderous. He lacked the ethereal fire.

Puritan di-  
vines.

John Howe was born in 1630, and died in 1706. He

studied both at Cambridge and Oxford, and in 1656 he was appointed domestic chaplain to Cromwell. Under the "Act of Uniformity" he was ejected from his parish at Torrington, and wandered about preaching here and there until he found a home in Ireland, where he wrote his greatest work, "The Good Man the Living Temple of God." He afterward became the pastor of a dissenting church in London. He travelled on the continent, and resided for a time at Utrecht in Holland. At the "Declaration of the Liberty of Conscience" in England, he headed the deputation of dissenting ministers in their address to the throne.

He was perhaps greater as a theologian than as a preacher; but as his theology was originally, for the most part, presented in the form of sermons, and those gathered up into treatises, he takes his rank as one of the great theological preachers of his age. English theology at this day, it might be said with little qualification, owes more to John Howe than to any other Englishman. When very young he drew up a book of divinity for his own use. His writings as well as his sermons are characterized by a lofty eminence of thought, broad views of the divine nature, and great spirituality. He disliked exclusiveness in religion, and could not be, even in the controversial times in which he lived, a sectarian. He strove for union among Protestants of all names. His sermons are long, scholastic in form, dwelling with prolixity on the explanation of terms before coming to the subject, and abounding in learned and Latin phrases; but still for his times they were full of life, freedom, and power; and as has been said, "The better times of the Church will be marked by an increasing appreciation of John Howe's writings."

His sermons are sometimes more like contemplations of

divine truth than homilies ; in which there are thoughts marked by intellectual force and majesty, and a certain ravishing sublimity. He delighted in dwelling on the being, nature, and attributes of God, and the image of God in man, so that from his profound ideality and spirituality of conception he has sometimes been termed the "Platonic Puritan." His sermons form in themselves a "body of divinity ;" and the preacher, especially if he be one who desires to be grounded in the deepest ideas of a theological science which is at the same time imbued with the purest influence of the word and spirit of God, cannot afford to be unacquainted with the writings of John Howe. Howe must not, however, be thought of wholly as a theologian or theological preacher ; he was also plain in the rebuke of sin, and practical in his views of Christian morality. He says, in one of his discourses, "A miracle may strike a little wonder at first, but good morality (*i.e.* a holy conversation) it sinks, it soaks to the heart." One of his finest and most moving discourses is that entitled "The Redeemer's Tears."

Richard Baxter was born in 1615 and died in 1692, his life embracing a controversial period of history. He was ordained at the age of twenty-three, and became in 1640 the parish clergyman of Kidderminster, where he not only won a high position as a preacher, but was the instrument of religious reformation. On the breaking out of the civil war, though a strong monarchist he was also a strong Puritan, and he exerted a conservative influence during all that troublous time on both parties. He was, however, outspoken in his opinions, and at length, by the "Act of Uniformity," was driven from the English Church, so that the latter part of his life was chiefly spent in the

Richard  
Baxter.

writing of those works which have made his name famous. He was a voluminous author, the total number of his publications exceeding one hundred and sixty ; and of them Isaac Barrow said that " his practical writings were never mended, and his controversial seldom refuted." Of all these works none are more profitable in a homiletical point of view than his " Reformed Pastor ;" and in a spiritual point of view than his " Saint's Everlasting Rest." His published sermons are now mostly

**As a preacher.** in the form of tractates or treatises, as those of John Howe. Of preaching Baxter himself said : " It must be serious preaching which will make men serious in hearing and obeying it ;" and the spirit of this remark characterized his preaching throughout. He was a solemn and searching preacher, addressing the conscience in a way that might be justly termed " blood-earnestness." Sentences like the following frequently occur in his sermons : " O thou carcass, when thou hast lain, rotted, and mouldered to dust till the resurrection, God will then call thee to account for thy sin, and cast thee into everlasting fire before you can be made to feel." But it is said of him that while in his youth he preached of repentance, of sin, and of everlasting wrath, in his old age he preached of the love of God and of Christian charity, and his sermons became almost like hymns of the praise of God.

But he is especially powerful in appeal, using the greatest plainness of speech, and calling men sottish, senseless, stupid, carnal ; yet as he was animated by the love of men, and as his accents breathed of the pure influence of the Holy Spirit, and often were touched by a celestial fire, he was able to be plain even to severity. He labored for the meanest and poorest as well as the greatest of his flock. He studied the temper of men's



minds, and as a pastor and preacher he tried men's spirits with rare penetration and faithfulness.

He had a certain noble negligence of style, and much copiousness of expression, though with no affected eloquence or rhetoric.

His preaching was, indeed, without ornament, though Baxter had a vein of poetry in his nature. In his younger days his sermons were of a highly argumentative and theological cast ; afterward he relied more on simple fact, Scripture, and experience. In truth his sermons form a rare union of reasons and motives. His style was plain, natural, and clear ; and, as he said, " My intellect abhorreth confusion." He also abhorred all affectations of style, and sought to preach simply, by manifestation of the truth commending himself to men's consciences. He labored to save souls. All his powers he threw into that object, and his language often reached the extreme of earnestness and passion. He cried out, " O that heaven and hell should work no more on men ! O that everlastingness should work no more !" Baxter showed the martyr-spirit, even where he may have erred sometimes in his opinions. He steadfastly upheld his principles, both in the presence of Charles II. and of Cromwell, suffering persecution for conscience' sake ; and he was in advance of his times in principles of Christian toleration and communion. Baxter spoke once of his own style of preaching and writing in this wise : " Though I have had my part of all these means (that is, of books and learning), yet being parted five years from my books and three years from my preaching, the effects may be seen. You must expect neither quotations or oratorical testimony, or ornaments of style ; but not yet having wholly ceased from writing, I may own so much of the exactness (of good style) as will allow me to entreat the readers not

to use me as many have done, who by overlooking some one word have made the sense another thing, and have made it a crime to be exact in writing, because they cannot or will not be exact in reading, or charitable or humane in interpreting." His sermons, like those of his times, are long, and elaborately planned, with many divisions and subdivisions.

It would not do to leave this mention of the great Puritan divines without a passing allusion at least to perhaps a greater than them all—viewed as a man of genius—simple John Bunyan, who once upon a time had a dream that opened deeper into things divine than many a prophet's vision. John Bunyan is commonly looked upon as the author of "Pilgrim's Progress," and that is all that is known of him. It were indeed enough to have been the author of a book which Longfellow calls "the English *Divina Commedia*," and of which it has been said, "It is supposed that no other book, except the Bible, has gone through so many editions and attained to so wide a popularity in all languages, as the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' " But Bunyan was also a preacher endowed with special gifts and power. He was born in 1628, the son of a tinker, and was brought up to that humble occupation. The opinion which has commonly prevailed, that he was a profligate youth, and which rests mainly upon some of his passionate self-accusations, is not now believed to be true in the sense of an outwardly licentious life. He had temptations and profane thoughts, and fightings with Satan as did Luther; but that his conversion awakened his whole higher nature, intellectual as well as spiritual, to a remarkable degree of activity, and made a new man of him, there is little doubt. He served in the Parliamentary army for a while, and then became a preacher in a Baptist church at Bed-

ford. He was silenced, and then imprisoned in Bedford Jail under the act passed against conventicles. During the twelve years of his imprisonment he wrote "Pilgrim's Progress." On his release he again became a preacher, itinerating until settled again in Bedford, and continuing in that calling until his death in 1688.

In his preparation for preaching his only teacher seemed to have been the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of the Scriptures, so that his preaching was both scriptural and spiritual. His very imagination, which was that of a man of the highest creative genius, worked through the imagery and the language of the sacred writings. His preaching was what might be termed, almost more than that of any other modern preacher, inspirational preaching, or prophesying, in the New Testament sense of the word. He did not care to meddle much with things controverted, or with speculative theology, but spoke directly to the spiritual nature. His preaching seems to have been characterized by four things in especial: 1. Faithfulness to the conscience. His sermons had an awakening power to the sinfully dead conscience, like that of the prophets, as is especially seen in his famous "Jerusalem sermon." His "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" is much in the style of his ordinary preaching. He said of his own preaching: "I did labor to preach the word so that thereby, if it were possible, the sin and the guilty person might be particularized by it." He roused the impenitent man to a lively sense of personal responsibility. 2. Intense solicitude to win souls. "I thank God," he said, "that my heart hath often, all the time of this exercise, cried to God with great earnestness, that he would make the word effectual to the salvation of souls." Bunyan, like Baxter, is one of those not common in

the long bead-roll of great preachers, whose whole aim seemed to be to save the souls of men from the grasp and curse of sin by the power of the gospel. He had no other object set before him than this. 3. Strong faith in the power of the gospel. "I have been in my preaching," he writes, "especially when I have been engaged in the doctrine and life of Christ, in that work, as if an angel of God had stood at my back to encourage me ; oh, it hath been with such power and heavenly evidence upon my own soul, while I have been laboring to unfold it, to demonstrate it, to fasten it upon the consciences of others—that I could not be contented with saying 'I believe and am sure'—methought I was more than sure that these things which I then asserted were true." 4. His preaching was accompanied with earnest heart strivings and prayer. He says : "I have observed that when I had a work to do for good, I have had first, as it were, a going to God upon my spirit, to desire I might preach there. I have also observed that such and such souls, in particular, have been strongly set upon my heart, so I was stirred up to work for their salvation ; and that these very souls have, after this, been given as the fruits of my ministry." Again : "I have observed that a word cast in by the bye hath done more execution in a sermon than all that was spoken besides."

Bunyan's view of preaching had a charm for the poor. There was often something of the same limpid quality of style that is to be seen in his "*Pilgrim's Progress* ;" but it was no longer a vision, a dream, but it had the power, and sometimes the terrible power, of a living word, cast like a thunderbolt upon the sleeping conscience.

In the following, or eighteenth century, although preaching in England was characterized by less of richness, originality, and spontaneity than in the for-



mer century of great divines, there were, notwithstanding their deficiencies in scholarly breadth of view, some effective and faithful preachers, who preserved the spiritual tone of the English pulpit ; such men as John Newton, Thomas Scott, Drs. Watts and Doddridge, Cecil, Charles Simeon, John Wesley, and George Whitefield. These last two (of whom we shall speak more particularly soon) stirred the stagnant atmosphere far beyond any power of mere human eloquence, and their influence is felt to this day in England, America, and the world. Whitefield was an accomplished rhetorician and finished pulpit orator, but it was his intense earnestness, his desire to save men, his power of emotion and sympathy, his plain, pointed, rousing appeals to the heart and conscience, rather than his intellectual force or weight of thought, which constituted his real power.

**English  
preachers of  
the eighteenth  
century.**

There was also, in this age, a school of sound, intellectual, and philosophic though somewhat cold preachers, represented by such men as Cudworth (belonging to a little earlier period), Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Lloyd, Secker, Bishop Butler (the last the prince of reasoners) ; and these were followed by another school (their lineal successors) of still more polished but less earnest preachers, represented by Clarke, Sherlock, Atterbury, Blair, Paley, and men of that class, who might be characterized as the "moral-essay" period of English preaching—correct, elegant, and (spiritually speaking) shallow. These eighteenth-century divines represented, on the whole, a period of dulness, or rather superficiality in the pulpit.

**Philosophical  
preachers.**

**Moral-essay  
preachers.**

Dr. Samuel Clarke was the exponent of a theology that, while it embodied some of the better thinking and

even higher philosophy of the time, and was serviceable

as an antidote to infidelity, was nevertheless

**Dr. Clarke.** a frigid system of reasoning, pretty much on a plane with the Cartesian philosophy that then prevailed, and seemed to have little conception of the profounder spiritual character of Christian faith. Dean

**Sherlock** was the best of this class of preach-

**Sherlock.** ers, and he sometimes rose to something like eloquence. Sherlock's sermons are worthy

of study for their clear method and their finished style, but they lack the Pauline elements of preaching. Atterbury,

**Atterbury.** too, Bishop of Rochester, attracted the attention of Pope and Swift by the controver-

sial liveliness of his pulpit style, yet there is not much in his sermons that shows that he really understood what

**Blair.** the gospel is. It was a time of the winter of faith, and Blair, barren and utterly common-

place as his sermons were, attracted more attention than he deserved, from the fact that there seemed to be the faintest reflection of evangelical truth playing about the surface of his smooth and graceful pulpit-essays. Indeed, at the time of the rise of the Methodist Reformation there were but few earnest and evangelical preachers in all England. It was a time not only when "dulness was sacred in a sound divine," but when sound divines were rare. It is related of the celebrated Blackstone, in the early part of the reign of George III., that he went diligently through the churches of London, and declared that "he did not hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and that it would have been impossible for him to discover, from what he heard, whether the preacher was a follower of Confucius, of Mohammed, or of Christ."

We spoke of the rise of the great Methodist move-

ment ; and this remark should not go by without our dwelling, more particularly than has been done, upon the two prime leaders, under God, of that wonderful movement, who were themselves remarkable preachers, and who illustrate some important, perhaps the most important, qualities of preaching—Wesley and Whitefield.

John Wesley was born in 1703 and died in 1791, having reached the age of eighty-eight years. This magnificent patriarchal life was rounded out and filled with great activities and great im- **John Wesley.** pulses, that made him a kind of “ father of the faithful ” of a multitudinous family of disciples, who have spread over English-speaking lands, and, in fact, over the world. The Oxford student life of Wesley formed the beginning of his religious career, which is said to have received its first impulse, instrumentally, from his intercourse with John Law, the author of the “ Serious Call.” He also early felt the influence of the principles of the Moravian brotherhood, especially in their evangelizing or missionary zeal. But he was himself a spiritual reformer who sprang out of the depths of religious declension in England and the English Church. He did not, certainly at first, perhaps never, intend to be the founder of a sect which should separate itself from the English Established Church ; but as he was not received and recognized by that church he of necessity came out of it—that is, essentially if not formally, as did the Puritans in the previous century. In 1740 the breach between Wesley and Whitefield occurred which divided the Methodist Church into two parties, the Arminian and Calvinistic ; but Wesley continued to be the head and soul of the body, above all in England, so that one writer has said of him : “ Probably no man ever exerted so great

an influence on the general religious condition of the people of England as John Wesley."

Wesley was absolute monarch in his own realm, and out of his organizing mind he moulded almost every feature, form, and principle of the great militant body that recognizes him as its earthly spiritual chief. He had an energy that was both indefatigable and systematic. He had the governing element joined at the same time with an unceasing diligence and attention to detail—the organizing principle which went to the minutest particulars. It is Wesley's "discipline" which has stamped the peculiar name and spirit upon what is termed Methodism, or the Methodist Church. With his genius for order he built up a system of religious rules, and a system or society of religious discipleship that equals, and surpasses in its merely outward features and organization, Loyola's famous "Society of Jesus," while it has infinitely more of the spirit of the gospel of Jesus. But his great secret of success was his desire to save the souls of men, and the doctrine of individual accountability which he revived in its primitive force in the minds of men deadened by form and worldliness. It was, in the words of Isaac Taylor, the awakening "sense of an immortal and guilty spirit coming into the presence of eternal justice." He spoke in plain, pungent, rousing language to the sleeping conscience. He addressed it without circumlocution or apology—as he said on one occasion: "We are poor and suffering because you impiously refuse to help. Ye are the men, some of the chief men, who continually grieve the Holy Spirit, and in a great measure stop his gracious influences from descending upon our assemblies."

Wesley had not, strictly speaking, a philosophical mind, or a mind of the most profoundly comprehensive



grasp ; but he had a powerful instinct of divine truth, an energy of intuitive reason in religious things, and a wonderfully practical style of didactic address. He was intended, in every fibre of his being, for a reformer, more perhaps than for the founder of a broad apostolic church ; indeed, no man is equal to this, and in this we have no Master and Teacher other than Christ. But while Wesley had his acknowledged faults of over-regulating, of over-organizing, of dogmatism, yet he led the Church of Christ out of the captivity and the barren desert into a new region of spiritual life and action. He too was a spiritual preacher who sought for the conversion of men to Christ, and his kingdom of faith. He preached, with the earnestness of intense conviction, the full, free, and sovereign grace of God in the salvation of every soul that would trust itself to it for eternal life. He blew again the gospel trumpet and rallied the hosts of God to hope and faith and a new life. His style of preaching was clear and flowing, and more calm and orderly than that of Whitefield. He was a man of logical and literary culture, and did not despise learning. His agreeable manners, unassuming dignity and authority, and his saintly simplicity of life aided his power as a preacher. He had also apostolic courage which defied the shouts, threats, and blows of infuriated mobs ; and before he called men to lead a life of sacrifice he had himself given his own life to Jesus Christ by an entire self-surrender.

Wesley's sermons are short, pithy, clearly-arranged, pointed, and very plain in style. Among his best sermons, though by no means the best, are "The Great Assize," Rom. 14 : 10 : "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" ; "The Marks of the New Birth," John 3 : 8 : "So is every one that is born of the Spirit" ; "Free Grace," Rom. 8 : 32 : "He that spared

not his own son," etc. ; " A Call to Backsliders," Ps. 77 : 7, 8 : " Will the Lord cast off forever ? and will he be favorable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone forever ? Doth his promise fail forevermore ? " The character of his sermons could not be better given than in his own words in the introduction to his published discourses. You there read the man and his philosophy of preaching the gospel.

George Whitefield was eleven years younger than Wesley, and was born in 1714, and died in Newburyport,

Mass., in 1770, twenty years before the death of Wesley. He was attracted, while  
**George**  
**Whitefield.**

a student at Oxford, by the peculiar religious system which afterward developed itself into Methodism, and that had been originated by the Wesleys a few years before. He became a preacher and was admitted to holy orders at the age of twenty-one, led to it both by his elocutionary gifts and his earnest religious convictions, delivering his first sermon with great effect in Gloucester cathedral. It is even said that " persons were driven mad with fear under his impassioned oratory." He soon commenced that career of revival preaching which swept over England and America like the sword of a destroying angel—destroying to heal.

" A homeless pilgrim, with dubious name  
 Blown about on the wings of fame ;  
 Now as an angel of blessing classed,  
 And now as a mad enthusiast.  
 Called in his youth to sound and gauge  
 The moral lapse of his race and age.  
 And, sharp as truth, the contrast draw  
 Of human frailty and perfect law ;  
 Possessed by the one dread thought that lent  
 Its goad to his fiery temperament,  
 Up and down the world he went,  
 A John the Baptist crying—Repent ! " <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Whittier's Poems. Fields & Osgood's ed., 1869, v. ii. p. 390.

All kinds of men were moved by him ; the distinctions of class were forgotten ; and though intellectual men like Bolingbroke and Franklin saw his inferiority in some of the rarer qualities of the intellect, yet they all acknowledged him to be a true ambassador of God. Whitefield is generally held to have been a preacher who spoke to the feelings almost exclusively, and whose great power consisted in his emotional style of address. This is partly true, but it does not go deep enough, and may do injustice to Whitefield as a preacher. His power consisted of something more than ephemeral feeling—it was the earnestness of a heart-conviction that sinners were perishing, and that the gospel alone could help them. It was a burning passion for souls that consumed him, and gave him as a preacher that spirituality, that solemnity, vehemence, and pathos, that awakening and convicting force, that made him even greater than Wesley or most other preachers in his immediate influence over the souls of men. If he now and then gave way to his emotions and wept in the pulpit, this was a true emotion, and it was as true to the laws of mind as was Wesley's logic. He himself felt with overwhelming consciousness the truth of what he spoke, which is a familiar canon of eloquence. This conceptual faculty as related to the objects of spiritual life,—this power of bodying forth in vivid form the eternal world, this spiritual and creative attribute of the imagination—gave Whitefield a freshness and vigor of style which never lost its hold upon men's minds. He was an indefatigable laborer. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean seven times, the last in his fifty-fifth year, and he always found great audiences, whole cities and towns thronging to hear him with unabated enthusiasm and interest. Crowds wept under his oratory, each man for himself,

and for his own sins. He laid his hand boldly upon the moral consciousness. He applied the gospel to the hearts and wants of men. He wrought upon the moral nature with the higher forces of the gospel, and awakened new belief in the Christian faith by the simplicity and amplitude of his perceptions of divine truth—of the abounding grace of God in Christ.

Whitefield did not possess the ratiocinative faculty, nor perhaps even the imaginative faculty in the highest sense. His sermons were not distinguished for logical or profound thought. They were inartificial, conversational, and dramatic, somewhat diffuse and stereotyped in their language, with a spirit of vivacious exaggeration; but nevertheless they were powerful. He was a master of elocution, and was both graceful and solemn in delivery. He was meek and patient under rebuke and persecution, endured revilings, bringing the world's bitter hatred upon him, but forgiving injuries with the spirit of a Christian. He had the hero in him, and wherever he was wanted or felt that he and truth would be most opposed, there he went, manifesting a Pauline grandeur of moral courage with a Pauline modesty and absence of self-display. The gospel, in a word, had renewed and potentialized a simple-hearted man, who gave all he had of mind, feeling, and energy, whether of greater or less compass, to the Saviour whom he served. There was therefore in him a power extraneous to natural gifts, a power from God. His popularity never waned, for it was fed from a higher spring.

Nearer to our own day, toward the beginning of the  
**Modern** present century, arose in England a class of  
**English** preachers of more true depth, both philo-  
**preachers.** sophical and religious, than had preceded  
them, such as Robert Hall, Andrew Fuller, John Foster,



and their great Scotch contemporaries, Edward Irving and Thomas Chalmers. We will say a few words concerning Robert Hall and Thomas Chalmers.

Robert Hall was born in 1764. In his childhood and youth he was feeble in body, but exhibited, like Pascal, remarkable intellectual precociousness. He was a classmate and friend of Mackintosh, the historian in Aberdeen College. When these two walked together the collegians would say: "There go Plato and Herodotus." He commenced preaching in a Baptist church at Bristol, exhibiting decided oratorical power; but his fame as a preacher culminated when he went, in 1790, to Cambridge. He finished, also, his ministerial life in Bristol, where the little old chapel at Broadmead, in which he preached, and his pulpit bound together with iron clamps to preserve it, are still to be seen, quite unchanged. His occasional writings, such as "The Apology for the Freedom of the Press;" his controversial tracts on political and moral questions; his sermon on "The Death of the Princess Charlotte," and his discourse on "Modern Infidelity," gave him a more than local fame, and made him known as one of the eloquent men of his times. After enduring intense sufferings all his life from an acute disease, which was heightened by the exercise of preaching, and compelled him often at the conclusion of the service to retire to his room in the church and fairly writhe in agony, he died in 1831. Notwithstanding his physical weakness and suffering, he was full of wit, sarcasm, and playful good-humor. He was brilliant in conversation. He had genuine nobleness and magnanimity of character, meeting sectarian attacks with equanimity, and showing much humility of spirit whenever his naturally fiery nature got the better of him. He had immense

power of moral indignation against untruth, meanness, and mean expediency. He lived in contact with public questions, and was fully awake to the influence of public opinion upon morality and religion. His sermons and writings, like Robert South's, are worthy of our study as a treasury of theological and moral reasoning, and also for their eloquent rhetoric. His "Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom" is, in some respects, a very fine piece of writing. His discourse on "Modern Infidelity Considered with Reference to its Influence on Society" was for its day a most effective treatise, abounding with thought and splendor of imagery, though it would not meet the sceptical wants of this day, as an apology for Christianity. But his more ordinary sermons, such as "God in Concealing," "The Lamb of God," "Spirituality of the Divine Nature," "The Joy of Angels over a Repenting Sinner," "Of Evil Communications," are noble sermons for study.

As a preacher his characteristics were

1. The force and weight of his mind. His very appearance in the pulpit was formidable, from his personal and mental traits. He looked the great man. He was really one of the great minds of his age—a mind at once of capacious philosophic grasp and of penetrative analytic force. He has indeed been compared to his contemporary, Edmund Burke, in the volume of his intellectual power.

2. The splendor as well as precision of his language. His brilliance of imagination was a marked quality, and shone through the forms into which his thought was cast. Some of his illustrations are as magnificent as anything in Burke's writings, though his imagination was more chastened than Burke's. There was a tendency to the oratorical climax, his thought expanding as it grew, yet never becoming vague or confused.

3. Power of abstract thought and reasoning. He had "much of the essence and effect of reasoning without its technical logical forms." He became absorbed in the subject, in the idea, and was borne along by it rather than by mere methods of discussion and division. In fact his sermons, while clear, are inartificial in respect of division. He was a great extemporaneous preacher, his discourses that are left to us having been either taken down short-hand or written out afterward with immense trouble, for writing was to him a physical martyrdom. In preaching, so great was the absorption in the theme that the preacher was not only forgotten, but sometimes the audience ; and this leads me to speak of one or two faults of Robert Hall's preaching :

1. His undue tendency to abstraction and generalization. He sometimes worked, as the expression is, "in fire as well as frost," but as a general rule in frost. He dwelt in this cold, abstract atmosphere, and did not treat the truth so much as a message to men as a subject of reasoning ; he did not bring down his thought to the minds and wants of his hearers. It was like watching the soarings and circlings of an eagle. He did not individualize and particularize. He was interested in the theme apparently more than in the audience.

2. With some magnificent exceptions, his style was lacking in vividness, point, and personal interest. He was inclined to the use of Latin and Johnsonian rather than short Saxon words ; but his style was harmonious, while at the same time strong. It has been said of his more labored discourses : " His language in (ordinary) preaching, as in conversation, was better than in his well-known and elaborately composed sermons, in being more natural and flexible. When he set in reluctantly upon that employment (writing), his style was apt to assume

a certain processional stateliness of march, a rhetorical rounding of periods, a too frequent inversion of the natural order of the sentence, with a morbid dread of degrading it to end in a particle or other small-looking word ; a structure in which it is to be doubted whether the augmented appearance of strength and dignity be a compensation for the sacrifice of a natural, living, and variable freedom of composition."

3. His preaching was too purely intellectual. He was almost too exclusively the metaphysician and the rhetorician, and not the simple preacher trusting in Christ and the Scriptures of divine truth for the conversion of sinful souls. He generalized rather than individualized truth. His prayers, though devotional, were exceedingly vague, abstract, and pointless. His theology might be called that of moderate Calvinism, with some tendency to a stricter Calvinism. He addressed men as rational beings, appealing freely to every motive which might influence their minds, though with utter avoidance of the doctrine of free-will in the Arminian sense, which was opposed to his theology.

Thomas Chalmers was born in 1780, in Anstruther, Fifeshire, Scotland ; was educated at the University of

St. Andrews, and after having been licensed to preach at the age of nineteen, his first settlement was at Kilmany, where, it is said, his attention was mostly directed to scientific pursuits and mathematics ; and here, it is related, occurred that change in his religious character which had such a powerful effect upon his whole life and preaching. Before this, to use his own language, " he walked among the elements of inconstancy and distrust." His sermons, before this period, were written hastily, and as a perfunctory duty, but after that they became " the spontaneous

**Thomas  
Chalmers.**



productions of the new spirit of love and zeal." His study of the Bible became intense. A friend remarked to him about that time : " I never came in before but I found you busy, yet never at your studies for the Sabbath. You said, ' Oh, an hour or two Saturday evening is quite enough for that ; ' but now I never come in but you are at your Bible." In 1815, at the age of thirty-five, he was transferred to Tron Church, Glasgow, where his fame as a pulpit orator was soon established, and the immense influence he gained over the people was employed by him in the furtherance of works of beneficence truly grand and original in their conception. He united the preacher and the pastor in a wonderful combination. His labors produced a reformation in the care and education of the poor in that great city worthy of the study of every pastor, reformer, and political economist. His own parish consisted of 11,000 souls, who were divided into twenty-five parochial districts, and over the whole of this complex system of religious, benevolent, and educational training of the people he watched and presided with the utmost vigilance, visiting, it is said, all the two thousand families of his parish.

In 1823 he was made Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews, and the following year, of Theology, at Edinburgh. He is generally reckoned to have made some original contributions to ethical science. The leading part that he took in the great Free Church movement, when four hundred and seventy ministers withdrew from the Established Church of Scotland, is a familiar history. He died in 1847.

We can only notice him, and that in a brief way, as a preacher. After the profound change in his religious character his preaching became of a most practical nature. He aimed at the immediate spiritual renewal of his

hearers. Nothing else satisfied him. He labored for this object with such earnestness and such a concentration of his powers "as to idle spectators looked like insanity." This, however, made him a power with the people; not only his Sunday services, but his Thursday evening lectures at Glasgow were thronged with eager listeners. In his preaching there were the broad intelligible qualities of thought, reason, and what the Scotch call "wicht"—perhaps in the end preferable to mere magnetism. He had great energy as well as scope of illustration, the fruit of a powerful imagination and wide scientific knowledge. His exuberant fancy ranged through nature and space for its objects of comparison. His features, like his native hills, were rugged, his gestures were ungraceful, and his tone and accentuation broadly Scotch; but the individuality, richness, and sweep of his thought, together with his simple earnestness, made up for all, and led the polished Canning to say, after hearing him in London, "The tartan beats us all."

His plan of sermon was almost without plan. He had few divisions, and the peculiarity of this mode of thought was this, that a sermon contained, as a general rule, but one theme or thought, and the development consisted of the amplification of this thought as from one common centre, of an unfolding from a point in a circle to the circumference, rather than a progression in one straight line, so that Robert Hall said that Chalmers' mind moved round like a wheel, turning upon a fixed point instead of like a wheel that rolled on. There was, in fact, a development, an expansion, instead of a mechanical progression. He piled up sentences and illustrations about a central thought or proposition till it stood in pyramidal proportions. His style had violent faults as

well as vivid beauties. This very tendency to amplification led to turgidity of style, to verboseness in the employment of words, and to enormously long sentences. One of his sentences, covering two or three pages, has four hundred words; and frequently he has sentences containing two hundred and three hundred words, making what one has called the unique and ponderous "Chalmerian period."

He also uses hugely pedantic and uncouth words—a cumbrous theological and scientific phraseology—like "vesicular properties," "afferent and efferent vessels," "unbridled appetency," "the alone Saviour of mankind," "to effectuate an object of desire," etc.; and he might almost be thought to describe himself in a sentence like this: "He just put forth the evolutions of his own nature as one of the component individuals in a vast and independent system." But all this was nothing: it even added, like his peculiar gesture and voice, to his individuality. His disciplined and abounding thought, his large and quick sympathy, his spontaneity that allowed no unreal or artificial utterance, his genuine manhood, his simple piety pleading, as he said, for "the crown rights of King Immanuel," his glowing eloquence, like Ezekiel's vision of wheels within wheels of living creatures, mastered audiences and swept before him all obstacles. With this eloquence that belonged to the man there was added the sanctified power of the true preacher of the gospel—ever setting forth Christ as the one object of faith, as "the propitiation, the sanctifier, the hope of glory, the all in all" of believing souls. Thus his ministry, having in it the evangelic element, was successful in the conversion of souls. Here he was superior to Robert Hall. He loved to pile up a great argument, as in his "astronomical discourses," but even to these

argumentative discourses he managed to give a practical and conscience-searching turn ; and in his ethical sermons, in which his preaching abounded, and in which he brought to bear his tremendous power of invective and plain-speaking upon the covetousness of the business world in the large cities, he never lost sight of the principle that " to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches ; and not until Christ had been pressed upon the acceptance of his hearers did he urge subordinate reformation of conduct and character." The crowds at his commercial lectures in Glasgow, it is said, would sometimes go away uttering curses both loud and deep against the preacher, but would be sure to be again present at the succeeding lecture.

Dr. Chalmers made a brave effort to become an extemporaneous preacher, seeing with his usual sagacity the superiority of that method, but he never succeeded in this attempt. His biographer, Dr. Hanna, says : " He could not on the instant light on words and phrases which would give adequate conveyance to convictions so intense. His thoughts ran in too great a volume for words."

Dr. Chalmers put genuine labor into his sermons, and thought that the more labor a sermon had the more effect it would have.

But after we have said all this there is one quality of Dr. Chalmers of which we have neglected to speak, and without which there would be indeed a fatal omission and blank in any true characterization of his genius as a speaker—and that is his great heart, his power of feeling and of sanctified affection. One writer who knew him thoroughly has said of Dr. Chalmers that " he owed his power to the activity and quantity of his affections." He had indeed, like Luther, a great nature, ample in all



its proportions of reason, passion, sensibility, and will ; there was a vast vital force in him ; and when this was fully aroused by the truths which he had preached, he carried all before him as a river that inundates and sweeps its banks.

The British pulpit of our own day has exhibited many men of very decided power, some of them still in the field, such as, in the Established Church, Dr. Arnold, Dr. Pusey, Archdeacon Hare, Whately, Trench, Samuel Wilberforce, Henry Melville, John Henry Newman, Maurice, Kingsley, Mozley, Dean Stanley, H. P. Liddon, and that matchless sermonizer F. W. Robertson ; among dissenters, John Angell James, Dr. Raffles, Baptist Noel, Edward Irving, McCheyne, Caird, Guthrie, Candlish, and Norman McLeod ; Thomas Binney, Alexander Raleigh, and Charles Spurgeon.

**British  
pulpit in our  
day.**

Before leaving the British pulpit we would speak a few words concerning F. W. Robertson. Hugh Miller, the Scotch geologist, had exceedingly high ideas of the Christian ministry, commonly saying that "true ministers cannot be made out of ordinary men—men ordinary in talent and character." F. W. Robertson suits this conception of the eloquent stone-mason ; and there was something too of Miller's stalwart manhood in the preacher, the primitive granite underneath his culture. They were both leaders of men.

**F. W. Rob-  
ertson.**

As wonderful as Robertson's sermons are, his character is chiefly to be studied, since his sermons are but the outgrowth of his interesting personality. His sermons could not have been different from what they were—intellectual, thorough, philosophic, expressive of the harmonious strength and beauty of his soul. Let us then

look, in the briefest possible manner, at the character of the man, and that will be the analysis of the character of his sermons.

1. Love of nature. The æsthetic principle that ran through the mind of Robertson like a vein of gold, ran also through his discourses. His delight in natural beauty imparted fresh nature to whatever he wrote and spoke. It was this that took his words out of the plane of ordinary discourse and made them full of fresh beauty and power. His illustrations are those of a keen-sighted traveller who lets no beautiful object pass unnoted, and he sees, too, the object with his own eyes, and not with the eyes of another man. This is ever a characteristic of genius.

2. Culture. His rich and varied culture, both classical and philosophical, as well in language as in logic, gave him the mastery of a finished style, condensed yet delicate, combining elegance and force. The thought moulds the style, and he speaks like a man who has ideas forcing themselves into expression—not mere words, whether ideas be behind them or not; for while he has the rarest and most finished power of expression, his language resembling the sharply cut bas-reliefs around a Greek vase or entablature, it is the thought of a deeply musing soul which is prominent. An affectation of style, therefore, rarely if ever occurs. We do not make beautiful extracts from Robertson's writings, but we quote him for his strong thoughts put into their most condensed forms—and this is the highest type of artistic as well as moral beauty.

3. Intense love and realization of truth. He was no flippant utterer of truth or truisms. What he said about Christ was a real thing with him, and it had come out of the white heat of his mental conflicts. This made com-

mon truth, passing through the fiery alembic of his own mind, new truth, gleaming with new lustre. A part of his personality was in it. It addressed itself to other earnest and struggling minds with an unwonted power.

4. Love of humanity. While, as has been often said of him, he kept himself sternly from saying anything that was popular, he was the idol of the common people, because they saw the true man and the true lover of men in him—a helper, guide, and champion.

His high culture did not hurt him with the laboring classes, because even more than with Charles Kingsley or Norman McLeod, they discerned the real manhood under the scholar's silken robes—the manhood that yearned to die on some high moral battle-field for the people. His spirit of self-abnegation was like that of the soldiers and martyrs of the primitive Church.

5. Indignant opposition against wrong. He had not only the moral sentiment to feel wrong, but the courage to attack wrong. He said “to love intensely good is to hate intensely evil.” The sword of his spirit was a two-edged sword, cutting both ways. As no man ever laid open his own soul more bare to the gaze of the world, the throbbings of his heart against meanness and tyranny, whether without or within the Church, were painfully exposed. He could not hide his feelings, and while this candor caused him to be idolatrously loved and gave him power with poor, suffering men, it also brought upon him the hatred of the powerful classes in society whose actions and characters he assailed with such open fearlessness.

6. Method. This rhetorical quality of his sermons flowed from his trained intellect, which could not but be orderly in all its products. There is usually the thoughtful skill of extreme simplicity in the plan of his sermons. He rarely has more than three main divisions, and gen-

erally but two. He extracts a definition of the text, then draws from it a definite theme—a deep theme going to its roots and not lying upon its surface. He seems to come at the vital source of the passage through patient thought and fresh original exegesis.

7. *Biblicalness.* While Robertson is doubtless liberal in his theology, and belongs to what is called the “Broad Church,” still he finds his theology in the Bible. It is in the best sense of the word biblical theology, which is the only true theology. He may err—doubtless he does in many things—but his Christianity is not a Christianity of the schools, but a Christianity which comes from the study of the New Testament, and which has Christ in it. He makes Christ our hope, our life, our model, our salvation. It is no Hamlet with Hamlet left out. When he takes a text he sticks to it. He does not philosophize out of sight of the text. The text forms the material, the impulse, the inspiration of his sermon. His power of homiletical impression is biblical rather than theological. He is even superior to Dr. Bushnell in that respect, though they resemble each other in this as in many other features.

8. *Practicalness.* What Robertson has to say has point to it. It does not expend itself in glittering generalities. His sermons abound in sentences of condensed wisdom and of practical personal application.

9. *Reasonableness.* Robertson is an eminently rational preacher; but he is not a rationalist. His preaching is based on reason, and is a reaction from an age of rigid submission to creeds. It is reason baptized with a Christian spirit. Puseyism was his first intellectual idolatry, but he shattered his idol at the bidding of reason, and above all, of the Word of God.

10. *Extempore ability.* He was an extempore preach-



er, basing his sermons in the thought rather than in the words. He rarely used more written notes than could be pencilled upon a visiting card, or scrap of paper.

Robertson was not without faults which should deter us from making him our absolute model as a preacher. Among these may be mentioned three in especial :

1. Unsettled theology. Perhaps this very trait endeared him to thoughtful doubters, and gave him claims to their sympathy, seeing he was a sincere striver after the truth. Though an independent thinker and sincere learner, his theological opinions shift about with much uncertainty, yet, it must also be said, they ever grew nearer to a noble consistency of Christian faith. But his theology is suggestive rather than systematic. It is right as to the spirit, yet perhaps not always so as to the letter.

2. Fragmentary style. From his extemporaneous method, or from poor reporting, many of his sermons come to us in an unfinished state as regards composition. Perhaps this is only an error of transmission, for his style in most respects is about perfect.

3. Morbidity of spirit. This arose partly from an ascetic tendency which he took early from Tractarianism and partly from ill-health, or an extremely sensitive and overcharged nervous organization. This, however, he was overcoming grandly, and growing healthier in spirit even to the end, when death gave him the perfect life. Yet Robertson's biography is a sad book to read, though highly ennobling, as tracing the history of a soul beating its way upward into the clearer light with slow and wounded wing. Notwithstanding these imperfections, if they be such, Robertson is worthy of our thorough study. As a mere sermonizer, in the arrangement and presentation of his matter he shows the rarest rhetorical skill, and

while his style is simple his thought is profound. His poetic sense and his spiritual earnestness led him to address the heart as well as the head, both in illustrations and appeals. As an interpreter he goes beneath the letter and values the spirit more than the form. His sermons are thrown into life-forms and are not mere dry intellectual processes. He is a manly thinker. He is an earnest religious teacher. His religious system might be condensed into this : that the life of God in us, as manifested in Christ, leads to the sacrifice of self for God and man.

English preaching, it must be said, has, generally speaking, fallen into a somewhat narrower range of ideas, and does not appear to have the ample freedom, profound depth, solid thought, or literary splendor of its earlier days, being too often intensely devoted to an ecclesiastical idea ; and if it has aught remaining of the Puritan energy and assertion of the free principle, it does not always possess the corresponding spirituality of tone. There are, however, in all the various bodies of the English religious world, many preachers of great learning and originality, as well as of high earnestness of aim, who represent the advanced state of religious thought in England.

Coming to America and New England, we find that, while the first ministers were educated and able men, the true leaders (*ἡγούμενοι*) of the people and men of heroic martyr-spirit, their style of preaching was exceedingly scholastic, owing, perhaps, to the fact that all the learning in the community was confined to the ministerial class ; but, notwithstanding this, such men as the Christ-like Eliot, called " the apostle to the Indians," John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, Nathaniel Ward, Thomas Shepard, John Davenport, Roger Williams, Francis Higginson, the

**The American  
and New  
England pul-  
pit.**

**Its early  
preachers.**

Mayhews, and the Mathers, were preachers of great ability and influence, in most instances of eminent piety, and highly accomplished for their day, when the people considered a learned ministry to be a first necessity of life—as necessary as “fire to a smith.” To Roger Williams belongs the high praise of having founded a State upon freedom of conscience, thus applying the great principle of Christian liberty to civil things.

Immediately before the period of the American Revolution there were some strong political preachers in New England, dealing with the fundamentals of government and Christian civilization, one of whom, Jonathan Mayhew, born 1720, died 1766, in his famous election sermon preached in Boston in 1750, laid down the ground-principles of human government and constitutional liberty, which, bearing fruit in the Adamses and Otises of the day, led to the Revolutionary War and the freedom of the United States. Other names of political preachers and leaders of opinion were those of Charles Chauncey, Samuel Langdon, Samuel West, Samuel Phillips Payson, and Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College.

**Political  
preachers.**

About the beginning of the second century after the settlement of New England, there sprang up a style of preaching far superior to that of the earliest ministers; which, for metaphysical depth as well as spiritual earnestness, has rarely ever been surpassed. Its unequalled master and originator was Jonathan Edwards, who was followed by a race of lesser giants, Hopkins, Bellamy, Edwards the younger, Dwight, Emmons, and many other noted preachers and theologians, who showed the controlling influence of Edwards's mind, which has, in fact, moulded the American pulpit in its essential qualities and characteristics down to the present.

While Edwards will always be looked upon as a master in metaphysics and dogmatics, as one of the main pillars of Calvinistic theology, yet the power of Jonathan Edwards also as a preacher is represented to have been tremendous. The great revival of 1740, of which he has written a narrative, in all probability sprang, under God, instrumentally from his preaching. In his sermon on "The Last Judgment," one of his hearers said that "he expected, when Mr. Edwards stopped, that the heavens would open and the Judge descend, and the separation of the righteous and the wicked immediately take place." His style, regarded in a literary point of view, was not a finished one, and was often, on the contrary, hard and rugged; but his clear mind shone through it, and by the force of his mental vision he made spiritual truths plain. This graphic power of exhibiting truth showed not only his force of thought, but the idealizing faculty of his imagination. He felt the want of early culture in the art of writing, and set himself in middle life to the work of improving his style; but thought was the important element of his preaching; he addressed chiefly the understanding and conscience. His sermons were carefully written upon the scholastic model, and with an elaborately methodical plan. He dwelt on the explanation of Scripture, which he presented as a fact the most momentous to the soul; and his idea seemed to be that the truth—the doctrinal truth—made clear to the mind and there left, was sufficient to do its own work. He preached down as from a divine point of view, wielding the attributes of God, especially those of justice and holiness, with mighty power and with a kind of celestial inexorable logic; but he did not bring out so clearly the love of God and the grace of the gospel as they meet man's wants.



His own meekness and holy purity of character added weight to what he said, and in the immediate results of his preaching few apparently have excelled him. He was not a great orator, in the common acceptance of the word, for his delivery was monotonous; but his prophetic earnestness made him powerful. He seemed to dwell in the counsels of Almighty wisdom. His sermons were adapted to awaken the dead conscience of the New England Church, then fallen, through the influence of the "half-way Covenant" and other causes, into an apathetic and immoral state. They startled the auditors like the judgment-trump of God.

The sermonizing of Edwards and his immediate successors was characterized, as we have said, by a faithful exposition of the Scriptures, and by a careful drawing out of the doctrine which they fortified with all manner of illustrative reasoning, both moral and metaphysical; and after that came the application, which included often more than half the sermon, and was very solemn and pungent. It was dealing with eternal interests, and was intended to be God's argument with men to convince them of sin and reconcile them to God. The present life and its interests were nothing—the life to come everything. This application saved the preaching from being altogether too abstract. This method of preaching, while it was solemn and powerful, had doubtless faults, which have since been more or less corrected, and which will be still more successfully guarded against as a clearer knowledge of the true life and universal power of the gospel prevails; but the American style of preaching, according to the principle we started with, is also the direct product of the intellectual character and history of

**Characteris-  
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the American people. For instance, the element of faith, which so peculiarly characterized the history of our fathers, leading them, like Abraham, to leave their ancient homes and to seek a country that God should give them—this element of the Reformation—predominates in American preaching, hiding even the essential doctrine of good works ; thinking too little of it, or not giving it the actual place assigned to it and to the great Christian virtues of hope and charity in the New Testament. The principle also of liberty of conscience, which was so marked in the character of the founders, impelling them to separate themselves from popery, ritualism, and church authority, is seen in American sermonizing in its simple and earnest appeal to the Scriptures, resting proof upon the Word of God and not upon human authority, urging to personal search, and setting forth individual responsibility. Indeed, this element of *conscience*—this bringing of truth to bear upon the “man of the heart”—is strongly, one might say, terribly, distinctive in American preaching, leaving often no tender thing living in its fiery blaze. The one thought of sin against God seemed sometimes to consume all other thoughts and to destroy all the gentler feeling and the more passive affections of the mind ; but this preaching to the conscience was a purifying fire that searched the recesses of the soul as with “the candle of the Lord.” Early American preaching had also the element of sound learning. While literature, for its own sake, was not cultivated by them, and amid the stern realities of American life there was little of the æsthetic sense (though poetry did show a wan flower now and then), yet learning flourished. John Cotton had been the Dean of Emmanuel College, in Cam-

Product of  
the character  
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of the people.

bridge. Increase Mather could converse fluently in Latin, and could compose in Hebrew and Greek. His son, Cotton Mather, prodigious pedant as he was, was more learned still. "The proportion of learned men among the early Puritans was extraordinary. It is probable that between the years 1630 and 1690 there were in New England as many graduates of Cambridge and Oxford as could be found in any population of similar size in the mother country. At one time, the first part of that period, there was in Massachusetts and Connecticut a Cambridge graduate for every two hundred and fifty inhabitants, besides sons of Oxford not a few."<sup>1</sup> While the preaching that came forth from this learning was abstruse, technical, and highly theological, it had all the substantial characteristics of intellectual preaching. It spoke to the thoughtful nature of man. Jonathan Edwards would have been profound in any field of human knowledge which he had entered. The prominent qualities of rational knowledge, or knowledge through which the reason had powerfully cleared its way, as through the tangled forests of the original wilderness, were in the preaching. The audiences themselves were composed of strong-minded, thinking men, and the pulpit was their one fountain of instruction. But in its intellectual aspects American preaching unites the argument-loving or logical element with the more practical quality of the American mind. It is highly doctrinal, as suiting an intellectual race, and one inclined to subtle speculation; but it is both doctrinal and experimental; it aims to reach the conscience through the understanding, and to bring men to an immediate decision in the matters of the soul. It deals with these doctrines as if they were

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<sup>1</sup> A History of American Literature, by Moses Coit Tyler, v. i. p. 93.

indeed the greatest truths, the substance of things, the only things worthy of a rational being's attention. It is therefore characterized by an intense earnestness. The early preachers, like Hooker and Edwards, seemed to preach with a spiritual intensity, with the lightening of divine truth as out from the very bosom of the cloudy presence of God's power and wisdom. There was an utter loss of self-consciousness in these utterances. The question of authority in the preacher was in the early days unheard of. It is said of Thomas Hooker that "when he was doing his Master's work, he would put a king in his pocket." These ambassadors of God spoke with the majesty of their Sovereign's message to men's consciences, whether they would hear or forbear. And why has not the Holy Spirit, the actual guide of the Church in all ages, guided also in the preaching of American preachers of the Word, adapting it to the character, circumstances, mind, and wants of the American people, as being the voice of God to us in our passage through the wilderness ; as truly as in the preaching of Moses and Isaiah, or of those apostolic ambassadors who delivered the message of God to the Jews, Greeks and Romans ?

The American sermon, as we have already described it, is usually built upon a logical plan cast into the form of an argument, with direct practical lessons drawn from the demonstrated truth ; it is synthetic in form, and although generally biblical in tone and aim, yet it is not simply biblical as confining itself to the interpretation of Scripture and the setting forth of the word of God ; it is not satisfied with this, but it aims at a philosophical systemization of divine truth. Indeed, as was said, there has been a want of the truly evangelic ele-

**Characteris-  
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ment—a want, one might say, of Christ in his fulness, in his pre-eminently human nature and relation, in his perfect sympathy, in his love to man, and in the multifarious and intimate applications of his incarnation, and of the new reanimating life of God that has come into the human soul through Christ's entering into humanity. One feels this want in reading the otherwise admirable sermons of such a preacher as Dr. Emmons. There is a lack of Christ-like sympathy, of the soul-melting element, of something that wins, subdues, and converts the most obdurate heart through the imperceptible and resistless ways of divine love. They address the head rather than the heart. They are not too intellectual, but too exclusively so ; and such preaching has thus a rigidity of form which has not suffered it to come down freely enough to the actual feelings, needs, and comprehension of all men, so that it might be indeed and in every sense to them “ the glad tidings.”

There is recently more of this free human element coming into our preaching ; and the great fear is, that it will come in such an impet-  
New element  
coming in.  
 uous and untempered way as to endanger the substantial and divine groundwork of American doctrinal preaching. This new style of sermon applies the truth to the life in an exceedingly interesting manner, interpreting truth into natural language, language that is spoken by men every day. Such preaching seeks to introduce the Christian element into every part and faculty of the nature, and freely expresses the broader sympathies of the gospel for all men, and for all conditions of humanity. Its faults of secularity and irreverence, and of a certain carrying of the human element to an extent that oftentimes seems to overlie and obstruct the divine—these exaggerations, we think, will become

hereafter toned down, and will leave the soil enriched, like a great and apparently destructive overflow of the Nile. The moral element markedly predominates over the doctrinal in this style of preaching ; and there can be no pulpit eloquence, says Vinet, without the *moral* element ; but it should be remembered that the moral, the ethical, is formed upon the dogmatic ; and although exclusive dogma without the moral element extinguishes both eloquence and spirituality, yet the moral without the dogmatic also loses its deepest spring and power ; a wholesome mingling and interfusing of the two will make the future true eloquence and power of the American pulpit.

We would notice with some particularity, though briefly, but two of our American preachers, Dr. Emmons and Dr. Lyman Beecher. Of Dr. Bushnell, what is said of him in this book in various ways, must be taken as an inadequate offering to his powerful, original, and most inspiring genius. His sermons on the "New Life" formed an epoch in homiletical literature, and in our higher religious thought and conception of divine things.

Nathaniel Emmons, another great American thinker and preacher, but as different from Bushnell as a glass prism from the sunlight it separates into its constituent rays, was a recognized preacher of the gospel seventy-one years, and a settled pastor over one parish in one town fifty-four years. Preaching, or, one might say, writing sermons, was the business of his life. By long practice he became an uncommonly skillful artificer in this line—a kind of cabinet-maker of sermons. Writing "generally rather than specifically," and upon a uniform plan, his discourses are finished productions, almost perfect of their kind. They are doctrinal and argumentative sermons ; and while following out his train of reasoning with an inflexi-

ble logic, he sometimes landed in false doctrine, or false statements of doctrinal truth ; for he shunned no result where his analysis pressed him or his reasoning fairly led him on, though the character of God might seem to suffer. Dr. Emmons arranged his ideas in luminous order, easy to follow and remember. He digested his subject thoroughly before he formed his plan. He sought the substance of truth, filling his mind with great principles of theology, and from the revolving in his mind of this system of metaphysical truth, his sermons were evolved. He thought and conversed continually on theological themes, and stimulated his thinking not only by the study of metaphysics but of the best writers in other departments, and of Shakespeare's tragedies. He did, however, his own thinking, living, as it were, in an abstract realm. He was one of the eminent theologians of New England, in the lineal line of succession from Edwards and Hopkins ; and perhaps the clearness of his style has made him the best or best read exponent of that remarkable theology. His style of writing is a model for neatness, precision, and plain unmodified assertion of principles. It has a calm and evenly sustained power, rarely rising to eloquence, never sinking to feebleness. It is excellent for its didactic quality. He was a sagacious student of the human heart, but rather by thinking than by intuition. He taught displeasing truth by way of inference, and was the incarnation of ministerial prudence. He had, however, his faults. He was too exclusively topical, and did not rest enough upon exegesis, so that his sermons proceed, or seem to proceed, from a human standpoint, and are run in the same mould of thought. He was also too exclusively intellectual, and thus his sermons become sometimes hard, and more inge-

nious and subtle than persuasive and edifying. The constant argumentation must have tended to produce a questioning turn of mind on the part of his hearers. There is not enough, also, of the divine gospel in his preaching, or not enough of simple dependence upon the higher supernatural element. His style, though exceedingly lucid, lies too much in the broad light ; it has not enough of light and shade. It is more like Euclid than Paul. Yet he has left us both admirable sermons—a vast treasury of them—and admirable homiletical suggestions scattered throughout his writings and his table-talk, which have been gathered up into a valuable volume by the labors of his favorite pupil, Professor Park. They are such as these :

“ The preacher must be established in great principles of truth.”

“ Leave the subject of your discourse in the minds of your hearers rather than a few sentiments and expressions.”

“ Preach better sermons every Sabbath.”

“ The thing—the thing—is what you are after.”

“ When you write a sermon say, 1. What do I know about this that my people do not know? 2. How can I make my people know what I know?”

He made a great deal of the plan, and he had a supreme respect for the application. He spoke both to saints and sinners in the same sermon.

He was to a large extent an extemporaneous preacher ; but his sermons were ever thoroughly composed, mentally, before speaking.

We would now speak of Dr. Lyman Beecher, both as a man and as a preacher.

1. As a man. His religious character was, above all, distinguished by a positive and hopeful



faith. He believed almost without a doubt, and with great energy and earnestness. Religious things were to him the most real things. All was referred to God ; and this supreme reference of everything to God's government was seen especially in the great turns and changes of his life ; when he went from East Hampton to Litchfield, and from Litchfield to Boston, and in going to Lane Seminary. The depth and earnestness of his religious principles are also shown in his anxiety and his unceasing efforts for the conversion of his children. He was their father twice over. His letters to his children give proof that his mind travailed for their eternal welfare. He is plain almost to severity with them. He was, however, an affectionate man toward his family. Very touching are his allusions to the death of his wife. He said to his son, " These are the sermons I wrote the year after your mother died, and there is not one of them good for anything." Yet this affection did not prevent him from training his children's minds by merciless encounters with them in argument. He taught them to think and reason, as a mastiff teaches its young to fight. There was immense intellectual activity in that household, springing from Dr. Beecher's own interest in mind. His mind was eminently practical, and sympathized with everything that had in it the promise of good. Nothing was good to him that could not be reduced to immediate practical use. This trait rendered him nobly effective ; but at the same time it may have had an influence to give him a somewhat one-sided view of things. As a man and a pastor he achieved a vast amount of good work by setting other people to work, evincing in this great tact and magnanimity. He employed and interested young men to carry out his plans of benevolence or of revival work. " The Hanover

Association of Young Men," which was so efficient, was a creation of his. His knowledge of men was considerable, though he may have sometimes made mistakes, as he probably did in regard to Dr. Finney. The moral-reform movements of the present time owe much to his original genius and boldness in grappling, as he did almost single-handed, with intemperance, duelling, political atheism, and the spirit of absolutism in Church and State. He had a ready and pungent wit, not the quality of humor which quietly touches and plays about a subject, but which showed itself in unexpected striking illustrations and pithy, homely sentences, that stuck fast in people's memories. It was often the solidest wisdom packed in the oddest forms. He had a considerable amount of innocent vanity which sprang from his entire self-reliance. He seems to have had a healthy though not particularly fine or æsthetical love of nature. He loved fishing, as much perhaps for its opportunity for open air and exercise, and knack required for success, as for the beauties of nature that it led one into.

2. As a preacher. He was, above all, an orator, a *preacher*. His powers were eminently adapted to apply truth to the human mind with force and effectiveness, rather than to discover, weigh, and analyze truth. His mind was not eminently philosophical. We doubt whether he did or could make a thoroughly philosophical system of theology. But he was a great preacher. There was his place. He had both logic and passion, the material and the fire of oratory. He was one of nature's own orators. There were bursts of spontaneous eloquence in his preaching that, in his prime, are reported to have been of extraordinary power and even sublimity. The imagination of the true orator was marked in him, as some vivid passages in his Temperance Discourses still bear

witness. His ideas of writing and speaking had nothing of clap-trap and the false sensational about them, but they were sound and classical. As a minister he thought the pastoral work was necessary to make the good preacher, and that the two must be united. His sermons ever swept on to some pastoral and practical result on heart or life. No one could have a higher idea of the preacher's work in which he continued till near the end of his life, and it was a touching scene when he gave up his sermon-making and preaching. He was then ready to depart. But Dr. Beecher was, more specifically, a revival preacher. Here was his life and life-work, his glory and crown. He lived in the atmosphere of revivals; and to have a revival was his idea of supreme felicity. The last words he said were, "not theology, not controversy, but to save souls." He said of the period when he entered upon the ministry, "Dwight was, however, a revival preacher, and a new era of revivals was commencing. There had been a general suspension of revivals after the Edwardean era during the revolution; but a new day was dawning as I came on the stage, and I was baptized into the revival spirit." His ministry was blessed with many and powerful revivals at East Hampton, Litchfield, Boston, and also afterward when he preached as a revivalist at Terre Haute and other places at the West, and at Andover. To rally the Church for revivals was his incessant and absorbing work. His method of promoting revivals is as specially worthy of study by all those who are entering the ministerial field, as it would be for a young military officer to study the strategical principles and the campaigns of a Wellington or a Napoleon. He relied greatly upon the influence of a perfect concert of action, on church prayer-meetings, and on household visitation, bringing up the whole working capacity of the Church into

united and vigorous co-operation. His means of "dealing with sinners," as he termed it, were something quite original, as was the character of his preaching, at such times, to the impenitent and the inquiring. He watched with intense anxiety the condition of his own heart and the leadings of the Spirit of God. The end of a revival was the end with him. He did not run after it, as he said, any more than he would after a spent cannon-ball. His peculiar system of theology, or truth, as applied to preaching, was not probably so great a source of power as was the earnestness of soul and the faith and the faithfulness which he put into the work.

It would be interesting in this connection to speak here of Dr. Finney, who in some sense was a contemporary of Dr. Beecher, and whose method as a revival-preacher had strong and most interesting peculiarities of great practical utility for the young preacher to study ; but we must bring these remarks upon the history of preaching to a close.

We will not stop to discuss the effect of what is sometimes called Liberal Religion upon American preaching ;

<b>Influence of Liberal Religion.</b>	it has exerted a marked power in a literary and intellectual point of view, in bringing in a purer style of writing and a more finished culture ; and it has not been without its good in theological directions as a modification of extreme views, and as an influence to enlarge thought where it had become hide-bound by the force of a traditional dogmatism ; but it has had, on the whole (it is not uncharitable to say), a depressing influence in taking the fire out of pulpit eloquence and introducing an essay-like style of sermonizing. There can be no genuinely apostolic preaching without the earnestness of positive evangelic truth concerning sin
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and redemption. The sermons of such men as Dr. Channing, President Walker, and that giant, Theodore Parker, are worthy of our study for many most noble and admirable qualities, as are also those of such European Unitarians as James Martineau, Stopford Brooke, and the Coquerels, father and son. These preachers and writers, men of force and genius, have worked one golden vein which has been too little wrought by us—the ethical—and here we may learn much from them, and may go deeper than they, even in this their peculiar province.

Besides those already mentioned, the names of other American preachers, of Samuel Davies, John H. Livingstone, John Leland, Griffin, Payson, the Alexanders, Nathaniel Taylor, Erskine Ma-  
 son, Gardiner Spring, Olin, Summerfield, Bedell, Bishop White, Bethune, Barnes, McClintock, without mentioning eminent preachers now living—these are familiar names, and, taken together, there probably never has been such a body of preachers, comprising so much of intellectual power, sanctified earnestness, and living faith, since the days of the apostles.

**Names of  
American  
preachers.**

The main practical lessons to be drawn from this brief survey of the history of preaching are (1) that the preacher, especially the young preacher, should study  
 to comprehend and to combine the various excellences of the different kinds of preaching to be found in all times and ages, and to enrich, strengthen, and elevate his own preaching by endeavoring to appropriate whatever is good in them all. He should be led to read the sermons of all ages in their original forms. It is true that sermon literature will not particularly help the preacher—

**Practical  
lessons from  
study of  
history of  
preaching.**

his real inspiration should be from the study of the Scriptures, and his own heart and life ; but he may have his enthusiasm aroused by the study of the great models of his art —by placing before himself great ideals. He may strive to come at their sources of power. But let him remember that great men cannot be imitated, and he who is really great is built upon no other man's foundation ; his greatness is unconscious and inimitable ; still the deepest sources of power in preaching which are without the man, and which are divine, and can therefore be drawn upon by all men, these can be sought for with profit ; though, as a matter of fact, the divine and the human are invisibly wrought together in the interior parts of the mind, and both, apparently, belong peculiarly to the man himself. (2) That he should, above all, earnestly strive to catch the spirit and calling of his own age, feeling that the Spirit sweeps on like the wind and never recedes ; that it always hastens to a higher and fuller expression of the love of God ; and he should, therefore, adapt his preaching to the evident leadings and manifestations of the Spirit in his day, and to the living men about him, without at the same time yielding up the essential qualities and characteristics of the true preacher of the Gospel of Christ which belong to all time, and to eternal truth.

## SECOND DIVISION.

### OBJECT OF PREACHING.

#### SEC. II. *Object and Design of Preaching.*

By reason of mistakes sometimes made upon the fundamental topic of the object of preaching, and of the related subject, the true sphere of the preacher, and the great evils that result from these errors, it becomes necessary for the young preacher to have some well-defined understanding of this whole matter. It is vital. The work and sphere of the preacher is vast, almost requiring an angel's powers, yet at the same time it is something positive, and is not precisely the sphere and work of another man ; and it is good to know this, lest one waste his powers in vain efforts, and in fields of labor which are really not his own. In regard to the grand object of preaching it might be said, negatively, that Christian preachers are not set in the community to teach metaphysics and theology, to cultivate eloquence and literature, to conduct a splendid ritual, to build up, financially, strong and paying churches ; but the preacher has a higher sphere and work which, whatever it is, is separable from every other. While it is a work mainly in the realm of conscience and spirit, while it takes hold of everlasting interests, it is still a definite work. It is not exactly the work of the scholar, or the philosopher, or the historian, or the scientist, or the advocate, or the soldier, or the

business man, or the man of affairs in the State, though it partakes of all these, as might be witnessed, for example, in some of the preachers of the Reformed Church of France in the seventeenth century, who were genuine statesmen of the first order. But while it has no place properly among the common occupations of men (though classified as one of the three learned professions), yet it is, and men still recognize it to be, the "divine office." The gospel, or God's message of peace and life, being a gift divinely suited to its object, which comprehends the whole being, and is fitted to secure the complete restoration of humanity, is addressed to man in relations strikingly corresponding to the three great divisions of his rational, moral, and spiritual nature; in other words, as a doctrine, as a motive, and as a life, and these relations in turn correspond to the three essential properties of Christian preaching, which threefold design we proceed to unfold. All indeed might be expressed in the familiar phrase "to save souls." The end of preaching is to secure men's salvation; and there can be no truer and more comprehensive answer to the question "What is the object of preaching?" because salvation includes everything that is good in character and life. The object of Christ the Saviour is the object of his preachers. But such a phrase, "to save souls," is easily spoken, and may become stereotyped and meaningless.

The preacher's responsibility is great; but let us endeavor to see just what it is. He is not to do things beyond his power. He is one in a series of agencies prepared by divine wisdom for the accomplishment of an infinite end, and he should know his work. He is not the head-spring of salvation, he is but a means to an end. Christ is the life; he is to proclaim this



life. Christ is the light of men ; he is to diffuse this light.

We would answer, then, that the first great object of preaching, which goes also to determine its scope, is,

1. Instruction.—This signifies instruction Instruction.  
in divine truth, and includes interpretation as  
a means to instruction.

Preaching has primary reference to truth, which makes its first appeal to the intellect or the knowing faculty ; and, above all, it concerns that absolute truth which comprises the knowledge of God, and which forms the basis of all other truth and being. This knowledge of God has relation to the manifestation of himself in revelation and in nature. It lies in its elemental relations in nature and the whole moral universe, but in its more perfect manifestation it is to be searched for in the Scriptures. The apostle Paul says (Eph. 5 : 13) : “ For whatsoever doth make manifest is light ; ” referring, as in the next verse, especially to Christ, as he who is the light “ which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” and this light penetrating the world of corrupt mind awakens everywhere new moral life. It is the duty of the Church on earth to diffuse this light of the knowledge of God and of Christ. The Church is endowed not only with the “ charisma ” of faith, to receive the truth, but with the “ charisma ” of preaching, to give the truth to others. It is to light up a blaze of truth in this dark world. Its messengers are to make known the truth to all living men, and all the successive generations of men, in its length, breadth, and fulness ; in the fulness of the love of God in Christ, of that last and most perfect manifestation of God as a Saviour, sending his Son into the world to redeem the world—so that there can be no possible misapprehension about it.

“Preach the gospel to every creature;” let all men see, in clear light, what are the facts and contents of God’s revealed truth, in order that they may understand and believe. This, historically, *was* the first object of the early preachers; they were “heralds” to announce the things belonging to the kingdom of God, whether men would hear or forbear. The apostles were sent everywhere to manifest “the truth as it is in Jesus,” to indoctrinate men in the knowledge of God as made known in his Son. In the apostolic logic, this preaching, or making known the truth to men, was essential to their faith and salvation (Rom. 10 : 17), “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;” (John 17 : 3), “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;” (2 Pet. 1 : 2, 3) “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

Now this same element of knowledge, of instruction, still remains in preaching. Christ said, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth;” and as Christ was “the light,” as he was “a teacher sent from God,” so that deserves not to be called preaching which does not shine within and without with the light of the knowledge of God, which does not contain the prime quality of instruction; for the gospel is a “word” even before it is a “message.” It is a word which is to be sent, or published. The “word” is addressed to men’s reason. In classic literature, as well as in the original Scriptures, it is well known that the term *Logos*,

"word," was used in a twofold sense, one as signifying "reason" or the "immanent word" (*λόγος ἐνδιάθετος*); the other as "expression," or the "enunciative word" (*λόγος προφορικὸς*). In the Christian economy it might be said that the "immanent word" or "reason" was a preparation in the human soul for the announcement of Christ, or a divinely given capacity in the higher rational nature of man when appealed to by the divine reason to receive Christ; while the "enunciative word" was the actual gospel. Here we have the subjective and the objective views, if we wish to look at it philosophically; though this is a secondary matter. The gospel is the true enunciation of God in Christ. It is the manifestation of the nature, will, and grace of God, as represented in the new revelation of the Son of God, the "Word" that was in the beginning, and that was with God, and that was God.

That "Word of God" is ever to be announced to men. That is the principal thing. It is itself the supreme reason, and speaks to the highest reason in man. It is the voice of God speaking to man's higher nature and conscience, as it spoke to him in the garden of Eden.

The preacher must be thus a voice to give utterance to this will and grace of God in his gospel. He is "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" of sinful and desolate souls. He is especially a "servant of the Word."

The preacher, therefore, is not responsible for originating new truth; but his business is to announce and interpret truth already originated, and that was from the beginning. He is to treat it mainly objectively—its great truths or doctrines as they stand revealed in the Word of God corresponding to the great wants of the human heart. He is also to rise above the mere ecclesiastical conception of the preacher; as, for example,

the Roman Catholic orator, who speaks what is given him by the Church, so much so that in earlier times, as we have seen, set "homilies," prepared beforehand by the bishops, were publicly read by the priests. In the Episcopal Church the clergyman could hardly presume to go beyond, or aside from, the authoritative prescriptions of the Church creeds and "agenda;" the Baptist preacher must maintain the Baptist view, and the Presbyterian the Presbyterian; the Congregational minister must preach so as to please the people, or some of the people—we refer now to the extreme tendencies of the denominational idea in its practical influence upon the preacher—but he is, nevertheless, the interpreter of a higher gospel. His duty is plain. He is to speak the Word that God gives him. The truth is given him, and he is to make it clear to the minds of men. He is always to make advance in the knowledge of God. He publishes to men, not new truth, but new discoveries of truth, as the star-sown spaces of the sky were the same in the time of Adam as they were in the time of Kepler, and as they are now; but the eye of the true interpreter sees ever deeper and clearer into their abysses.

We have said that interpretation is necessarily included in this idea of instruction. Let us look for a moment at this subject of interpretation which is really the chief form or instrumentality of the instruction which the preacher is to give. In its ordinary meaning, as applied to uninspired writings, interpretation refers to the philological and historical, perhaps rational sense, of any given passage or book; but in the interpretation of the Bible there is a new factor that enters into the problem, viz., Inspiration (*θεόπνευστία*), which brings in a supernatural element; and the

**Instruction  
through  
interpretation.**



interpretation of this underlying spiritual sense of Scripture makes the office of the preacher one of such great and high responsibility. Spiritual things are discerned through the teachings of the Spirit to faith, love, and obedience. "If any man will do (or is willing to do, loves to do) his will, he shall know of the doctrine;" so that he who "loveth is born of God and knoweth God." While it is true that the inner door of interpretation is unlocked by this key, it is also true that the outer door opens to patient scholarship. We are to come at the precise meaning of the words of Scripture just as we come at the meaning of any other book, written in a foreign language, by the help of grammar, dictionary, and commentary, and of that cultured literary sense, of which Matthew Arnold, in his "Literature and Dogma," speaks so well, if he did not overstate it.

Let the tendency of public opinion be what it may, the preacher should *hold to sound learning*, that he may be able to form his own judgment, since no commentator is infallible.

The jealousies and bickerings of scholars in the matter of interpretation should be a lesson to us. A wrong theory to start with, a mental twist, a temporary failure of critical acumen, or even of common sense, upon a given text, among hundreds and thousands of passages, sometimes invalidates the authority of the most acute scholar, be he English or German. The conflict of the age is now waging about the oldest portions of the Old Testament concerning the creation of matter and the origin of man, and a scholarly acquaintance with Hebrew would seem to be indispensable, if one would stand on the primitive rock of the original text. There should be a renewed enthusiasm in the study of this grand old language. A recent writer says: "A knowledge of Greek

is considered absolutely necessary for the clergy ; but in the present state of theological controversy, a thorough knowledge of Hebrew is even more necessary. On almost every disputed point of biblical criticism, the man who is not a Hebrew scholar is entirely at the mercy of the man who is."

But while he should be able to know the Scriptures in their original tongues, and for this purpose must and should freely call to his assistance all scholarly helps ; while as a scholar, an historian, and a poet, he should enter into the deepest soul of these old languages ; he must at the same time be himself in inner harmony with the truth, and be brought by the Spirit of God in sympathy with that Word which he interprets, as well as with those hearts to whom he interprets it. So he stands between the two.

" How deep you were within the books of God ?  
To us, the speaker in his parliament ;  
To us, the imagined voice of God himself :  
The very opener and intelligencer  
Between the grace, the sanctities of heaven,  
And our dull workings." <sup>1</sup>

The preacher, if he desires to be a true interpreter, is not to use the Bible merely as a treasury of texts for sermons, but as the nourishment of his thought, the constant source of that divine knowledge which he imparts to his people ; for he is not a mere brazen trumpet for the breath of God to blow through, but his own mind is to work upon the revealed truth—to translate, to judge, to unify, to combine, to bring to bear upon it his best critical and philosophical powers. He is boldly to employ the tests of his most searching analysis and his widest generalization, since a narrow and rigid theory of inter-

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare's " Henry IV.," iv. 2.

pretation is oftentimes more destructive than the broadest.<sup>1</sup> He is, above all, prayerfully to draw forth the riches of the Word as it speaks to him in a religious point of view, as a sinful man needing Christ, being willing to be himself taught of God, and having the passive as well as the active, the receptive as well as the seeking mind. In this way the humble interpreter becomes the wise teacher (*οιδάσκαλος*), and imbibes a portion of that divine wisdom which he dispenses to others. He catches the prophetic spirit of inspiration, and is imperceptibly clothed with its authority, so that he speaks as from out the "lively oracles." He is a genuine voice of God for instruction, consolation, reproof, above the voice of the sky, or sea, or mountains, or thunder. He speaks to what is more profound and enduring than nature.

Thus the young preacher may look forward to no feeble and superficial, but to a wide and deep ministry of the infinite Word. He should settle it in his mind that by severe as well as generous scholarship, by a life-long systematic study of the Bible, by the consecration of his powers to this holy work, by humble waiting on God for light, he is to make himself a true interpreter. This is his prime business—to understand the Scriptures—to give his days and nights, his strength and life, to this work. His prayer—oftentimes agonizing prayer like that of Ajax—is for light. He is the prophet of God, as the poet is the prophet of nature. He is not a preacher, if this is not his first work. He is a false prophet. He is a disloyal messenger. He speaks his own word, not God's. He does not seek to know and think over again the thoughts of the Eternal mind. His little ministry soon runs out. Do we not, indeed, discover here the secret of the oftentimes

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Arnold's Sermons on "Interpretation of Scripture."

superficial character and results of the ministry—of the small fruit of preaching and pastoral labor, of the almost total absence of the primitive quickening element in preaching, of the ambitious, low, and secular view of the divine office—of short settlements in the ministry—of the work of lay preachers to fill out (as some genuine “evangelists” of this day, though not theologically and artistically models of preachers, nobly and wonderfully are doing), the glaring deficiencies of formal, unsympathetic, unpopular and unbiblical preaching. The primary sphere of the preacher is, therefore, we conclude, to instruct in divine truth, to interpret purely God’s Word. He may indeed find God’s truth in nature, as well as in revelation, for there is, as Lord Bacon says, “a voice of God revealed in things.” But his principal work is to instruct in the things of the Gospel of God. He is God’s mouth-piece. He is to let God speak through him. That is his office, and to this work of instruction the best powers of mind, the finest culture, the most profound spiritual insight imparted by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, may be employed. But great as this office is, this does not set forth the whole object of preaching, nor, though in point of time it necessarily comes first, does it, perhaps, in point of fact, express the highest aim of preaching; and for the discovery of this we will have to consider the true results of preaching especially in those to whom it is addressed.

The second great object of preaching, without which it is of little use, we would say again is,

2. Persuasion.—This is, through the powerful appeal to motives, to bring men themselves into harmony with

the truth which is preached, so that it shall  
**Persuasion.** be to them the word of life. It is to make the truth true to men. It is more than instruction. It is beyond knowledge; it is the producing of repentance,



faith, conversion. It actually leads the religious aspirations to their divine object, bringing souls into vital union with Him who is the soul's Lord, Judge, and Redeemer. It is "speaking the truth in love." It is the truth persuasively and effectively uttered. (It is swaying the will, and turning the moral affections, so that men shall not only hear and understand, but yield and obey.) Augustine's great precept in the fourth chapter of his "*De Doctrinâ Christianâ*" is that the preacher should seek "to bend men to action." He is to use the truth of God with the whole momentum of his strength, to move men off their bases of sinful repose and save them. He is to regard sin as an evil to be mortally feared and escaped from as soon as possible, through repentance and the forgiveness of the gospel. Nothing short of this can satisfy the preacher of Christ; therefore it has been said by Vinet, that the pastoral work is a finer test of the Christian ministry than preaching, because it is the unambitious and unselfish seeking for wandering souls and bearing them back to the fold of Christ.

Here the preacher's own personality comes in. The Word of God forms the divine circle in which preaching, or the human element, freely moves and operates. Men themselves come to have power. "Filled with the Holy Ghost," they speak with the Spirit's potency. They become charged with a life-giving influence, though of an instrumental nature and degree. Through their preaching souls are begotten unto eternal life. The apostle says (1 Tim. 1 : 12), "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled (energized, empowered) me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me in the ministry." The Scotch preacher McChesney said, "I had rather beg my bread than preach without success;" and he meant by success winning men to Christ.

Christ himself draws through the preacher, and truth thus becomes a persuasive power. Preaching is truly a personal application of divine truth to the personal needs, sorrows, and doubts of sinful souls, so that they shall be led to the source of all life—it is a real, Christ-like sympathy with men.

“Some preachers have only sympathy with ideas, with organized thought, with religious system-making, and philosophy, so that men have felt the strength of their preaching, but have not been moved by it.”

What even is that which we call eloquence, if it does not move men with the movement of the orator's own mind ; if it does not persuade men by the force of the orator's own will ?

*“Quid aliud est eloquentia nisi motus animæ continuus ?”*<sup>1</sup>

The French Roman Catholic preacher of Notre Dame, De Ravignan, said to his theological students, “What is pulpit eloquence ? It is the power of spoken words to draw souls to their Creator. This is the highest of ministries, the most difficult and full of danger. We must then highly value it, and bring to it a pious union with God, joined with deep humility. He that would speak merely as a man, wastes his strength on human passion ; but to speak as an apostle we must go to those holy passions which I will call supernatural—love of God, determination to save souls, the strong, all-pervading zeal which springs from love of poor sinners ; in one word God, God alone, sought and gained through courageous and enduring labor, through ardent and painful prayer. Here you see the whole secret of an apostolic man. There are many who will preach from what they carry in their heads ; few, very few, speak from their heart, from their bowels

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<sup>1</sup> “Cicero De Oratore.”

of charity. The truth soon becomes known ; even the people of the world are not mistaken about it. In subordination to this interior principle, the source of sacred eloquence is always the Holy Scriptures. You know them well ; what you mean to preach is the word of God. To produce emotion is to feel it. This true emotion is gained first in prayer, then in the perusal of some favorite author, then in a strong will to attain a proposed end. Do not hesitate to give yourselves full scope ; speak directly to the passions in every tone by turn ; by unlooked for strokes move the depths of your hearers' hearts. True eloquence is a drama. Look at Bourdaloue himself, how his logic carries us away ; how earnest he is, while he seems so calm. Look above all at the matchless Paul ; he throws himself into the scene, he interrupts himself, he apostrophizes his audience, he prays, he weeps, he loves."<sup>1</sup>

The radical difficulty with men is not so much a perversion of the reason as of the will. Men are more wilful than they are irrational. Here the preacher is to direct his main assault ; to pour in his mightiest forces of persuasion and carry the citadel by the violence of a divine love. He is to aim too at immediate results. Life is not long enough to preach proprieties and semblances. He is to persuade men to be reconciled to God, not next year, nor to-morrow, but to-day. A living successful preacher says : " Preaching is the art of producing religious convictions and emotions in an audience. Its effect must be immediate, or it fails in preaching. It must be understood at once. Every thought must be clear before another is presented. Thus repetitions are often necessary, the expression of

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<sup>1</sup> De Pontlevoy's " Life of De Ravignan," p. 261.

the same idea in various forms, and occasionally the repetition of the very same words. Whatever interferes with earnestness of manner should be disregarded. The whole mind should be bent on the special work to be done, and that work is immediate impression. Just so far as the preacher's mind is diverted from this object by his anxiety in respect to the grammatical accuracy of his words, and the perfect taste of every expression, just so far will the sermon fail in impressiveness."

John Foster, it is said, grieved in spirit because he had never, to his knowledge, been the means of the conversion of one soul ; but who can doubt, who knew aught of his life, that John Foster had the spirit of a true preacher ; and any theory of preaching which leaves out of view this self-forgetting earnestness of the orator for God, this deathless resolve to pluck men from the destruction of sin, to break the chains of death and bring them at once into the liberty of Christ, is a false theory. Dr. Finney was as sure of his success in regard to hundreds of souls, as John Foster was doubtful about one ; but whichever was right, without this devoted aim, preaching is enfeebled. It becomes a weak thing, far below the manlier purpose of the reformer, the earnest author and journalist, the poet even, if he be such a consecrated nature's priest as was William Wordsworth. The scholarly culture and attainments of such a brilliant young man as John Coleridge Patteson, missionary bishop of the Melanesian Islands, were nothing compared with his Christian manhood, his single-eyed zeal, which taught him to be as simple as a child in his instruction of those brutified savages, afar off in the lonely isles of the Pacific, which led him to homely, self-denying labors for their salvation and at last to death from their hands. This "one thing" a minister of Christ must do.



The preaching, then, that does not actually convert men from the love of sin to the love of God, nor aims to do so, is a religious play-acting, and an ecclesiastical sham. Surely the most respectable preaching in our churches which has dropped out of it the element of persuasion, has lost that which gives edge to "the sword of the Spirit," making it powerful to search the thoughts and intents of the heart that sin shall be disclosed, that the love of Christ shall be borne in to its secret depths, that the way of eternal life shall be opened. But as the word of God is addressed to the whole of the man, and not to one aspect of his nature exclusively, so we have not attained to the most comprehensive and apostolic idea of preaching in that which ends simply in conversion; since it must go on into something higher still, in the establishing and perfecting of a holy life in the soul; and how broad is the scope of preaching in this regard! The cross is the sun of righteousness, the central orb that fills time and space with its beams, that searches human nature through and through, and casts light on all the varied interests of human life and all the aspects of human character; on everything, in fact, where there can be a right and a wrong, and where responsibility is incurred by the moral choices of rational beings. The final object of preaching, then, is

3. **Edification.**—This is to build up the soul (a slower process) in righteousness and true holiness. It is the work of soul-culture. It is the formation and completion of Christian character. It is **Edification.** rooting out the spirit of selfishness, malice, and impurity, and the training up of just, upright, merciful, honorable, chaste, loving, self-denying, heroic and Christ-like men.

The work of pastors and teachers of the gospel is laid down comprehensively in Ephesians 4: 12, 13, "For the

perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *unto a perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is the work of educating men into the benevolent will of God until they shall come in the fulness of their faith unto the perfection of Christ. This is real salvation. What, indeed, is a salvation that does not save from the power of sin—of all sin—and that does not bring into the perfection of moral purity ? The immediate aim of preaching is soul-enlightenment and soul-conversion ; but the final object of all true preaching is soul-edification—the formation of a true manhood in Christ Jesus. It looks, therefore, to the transforming of the whole man—the reason, will, and affections—into the spirit of that divine charity which is the bond of perfectness. Thus the meaning and end of preaching is really Christ. Christ the ideal, as well as Christ the source of spiritual life. The perfect manifestation of Christ to men, to trust, love, and obey, is the fulness of the gospel. This Christ-like ideal of something spiritually apprehended though yet practically unattained, is the inspiring object of all true Christian preaching, which, since Christianity is a life in contrast to a system of philosophy, does not end in the enunciation of doctrine, important as sound doctrine is, but in the real implantation and nourishing of a higher life ; and it is to be remarked in this connection, that the influence of motives which spring from Christ's own life, is the chief means of the spiritual edification of which we speak. The secret of power and of hope lies in a faith inwrought by the Holy Spirit, not so much in a creed as in a person ; and the union of the divine with the human in the person of Christ has made all things possible for us in the realm of moral and spiritual life.

In this love incarnate, this love given to us, there is power to purify and redeem the human race. While we despair, at least in this life, of searching to the bottom of this mystery, of defining or explaining it by any theory, yet the mystery of love working out the salvation of men by its own utmost sacrifice is there, and in this divine love must not the preacher be baptized by the Holy Ghost, who is the "Spirit of Christ," before he can preach "Christ, and him crucified"? How else, indeed, can he have the hope of redeeming the world or a single soul? But with it he can hope for the realization of a full salvation in preaching the gospel to men; of a redemption of their whole nature from the power of sin, and can labor for that end so that these souls shall grow up into Christ, who is the head, and bring forth all the beautiful fruits of holy living; and thus gathering together regenerated minds into the unity of Christ, he may labor successfully to build up also a Christian church, and a Christian state, and a Christian civilization, comprehending all that is true, pure, great, and divine in the world, and which shall be a synonym for the kingdom of God on earth. In order to bring about the great consummation which we have mentioned, of restoring the kingdom of God on earth through preaching, mere knowledge, skill, learning, philosophy, and eloquence are, we at once perceive, not sufficient. There must be on the part of the preacher the holy mind, consecrated to Christ, filled by his spirit, inspiring others with his life and love, in order thus to impart this new life, and to "beget men in Christ Jesus;" and on the part of the hearer, faith, love, and obedience to fit him to receive the truth, and to be built up in it. The preacher is only a medium; but he is a true medium between the soul and Christ. He must himself be in soul-fellowship with

Christ, and in him the spiritual must predominate over the intellectual. If, indeed, we speak of intellect in the pulpit, there is not enough of it, and it is dull compared with what it should be when God calls for the best, and compared with the force, fertility, and genius often exhibited in the other sciences and professions. But the great defect is the want of *fire*. It is the want of apostolic earnestness. The Christian Church fails to lay its grasp on the passing generations and upon some of the most brilliant and powerful minds. It is sometimes affirmed that Christ need not be in every sermon ; but as Christ is the life and centre of divine truth, and thus must be the end of all preaching, how can he be really absent from any true sermon ? To exhibit the truth of Christ in its beauty and completeness requires the spirit of Christ in the preacher, his spirit of love ; otherwise the unction, the renewing and edifying element, is lacking. Thus all preaching should be " a word of the Lord," and should have this characteristic of the apostolic preaching, that it leads the entire being into the eternal life of Christ. Now to bring these scattered elements of preaching together into one comprehensive whole, we would say that the true object and design of Christian preaching, in the largest and most stimulating view of it, is : So to set forth divine truth, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, with such clearness, simplicity, sympathy, power, fulness, love, and utter dependence upon and union with the " Spirit of Christ," as to persuade men to receive it truly to the conversion of their souls, and to the upbuilding of their whole life and character in the faith of Christ ; or, in other words, to enlighten, renew, and sanctify them unto eternal life in the kingdom of God's dear Son.



## THIRD DIVISION.

### PREPARATION FOR COMPOSING SERMON.

#### SEC. 12. *Considerations preparatory to the work of preaching.*

As a preliminary step it is well to gain some idea of the real difficulties in the way of the work of preaching, and of the best methods of going about to accomplish it. Let us then notice briefly some of the

1. Difficulties of preaching.—The prevalent ideas in regard to the easiness of the preacher's work have been increased by the now common and commendable habit of lay-preaching, by which Difficulties of preaching. those who feel prompted to instruct others become religious teachers and exhorters of the people ; and by the universal custom of address in prayer-meetings and on Sunday-school and moral-reform platforms. We do not say that many admirable sermons are not preached in this way, and great good done ; but from this or other causes the regular work of the preacher has been depreciated in value, and a style of preaching which is easy rather than thoughtful, sensational rather than searching, pointed rather than penetrating or profound, has been the result ; and this also has served to diffuse the false impression that preaching is not very difficult, and can be done by any one.

Now to make a good sermon requires many things

which a merely literary composition does not demand. It requires especially four things : 1. Scholarly knowledge of the Scriptures. 2. Insight and judgment as to choice of subject, so that it shall fit the wants of the congregation. 3. Power to set forth moral truth appropriately, implying a certain just knowledge of human nature and the human mind. 4. Spiritual apprehension of the truth, or a heart-deep religious experience.

One should thus possess some real, scholarly knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, so that he can elucidate a passage of the Bible clearly from the original. Otherwise he is at the mercy of every gainsayer. Then out of a vast mass of subjects, like an endless armory of weapons, he should know how to choose his theme so as to adapt it to men's hearts, consciences, and present wants ; this requires sagacity and trained perception, or some maturity of mind and character ; the truth must be reasonably and clearly treated, so that it shall not be perfunctorily, but edifyingly set forth, in a way fitted to teach and make a lasting impression ; and then spiritual truths, the most difficult of all to comprehend and teach, should be so truly comprehended by the preacher as to be made plain to the spiritual natures of others. There must be that religious experience, that condition of heart, that love of Christ and of men which is essential for the production of effective preaching, which qualities are not always possessed by scholars and eloquent men.

He who begins this work, therefore, should expect hard work ; it will draw upon all his energies. There was a proverb among those who presided at the Grecian mysteries that "the wand-bearers are many, but few are inspired." To be inspired one must go to the sources of inspiration. He must give himself to God and his work.

The young preacher should know that his profession, intellectually and morally, is a difficult profession ; its work is never interrupted, never finished, and requires the whole energies of his being, up to the last day of his ministerial life. One is not only to write sermons, but he is to write better sermons, to make continual improvement in preaching. He is never to think that he has done his best, or done what he could. He is never to suppose that he has exhausted revelation. He is always to be a student and a seeker. He is always to be learning new methods of communicating truth. He is never to give himself to an indolent repose. He has entered on a warfare from which there is no dismissal. He has consecrated himself, body and soul, to this work. If he does not study his mind loses its invention, and its resources are exhausted. Sermon-writing is an all-absorbing labor. One cannot preach and do anything else. If we wish to succeed as preachers we cannot fall back on old sermons. New exigencies, new applications of truth are continually arising, and he who does not make preaching his one life-work will fall behind others who give themselves wholly to it, and he cannot also hope to reap the reward of the faithful laborer. Although it is an ungracious thing to say it, there are ministers who are not, and who do not seek to be, successful. They do not study Hebrew and Greek. They do not think severely. They will not labor to preach well ; they will not learn even the external and collateral means and accomplishments of their profession ; they will not learn how to write ; they will not trouble themselves about the simplest rhetorical culture ; they will not even mend awkward habits of delivery ; they will not correct a false tone or a harsh pronunciation ; they will not take pains to acquire the art of public speaking, so that they can address an

assembly upon any subject with effect ; but, above all, they will not grapple with the real difficulties of setting forth divine truth effectively to men, which requires thought, clear arrangement of ideas, spiritual meditation, and prayer. They are doing, perhaps, all other things except giving their undivided energies to preaching. They say, perhaps, that there is no need of taking so much trouble about these things, for they will be helped at the time of speaking ; but they who say this are those who, above all others, need a thorough training ; for in God's work, as well as in man's, those who do not work are not helped ; and do such preachers deserve to be successful ?

Let us, then, come to the conclusion that it is a great thing to preach the gospel ; and yet we do not mean, by that, preaching *great* sermons.

Indeed too much is said, it may be, in theological seminaries about the need of taking so long a time to write a sermon—a fortnight, or a month, or two months. We sometimes hear such remarks from those who desire to say a strong thing in order to impress upon the minds of young men the necessity of steady thought and care in preaching. No one can think more of this than we do ; but even this may be exaggerated. While there is truth in this language, it also may greatly mislead. Sermonizing is a difficult thing ; but let us remember that the real difficulty, the hard labor in sermonizing, is in the preparation of the mind for the work. It is in the previous training. If the mind itself is philosophically trained, if it knows how to think, if it is thoroughly accomplished in hermeneutics, and in the art of composition, then sermons, especially if they are short sermons, may be composed rapidly ; and, as a general thing, two good and useful sermons may be prepared weekly. Of course an elaborate occasional sermon may



take weeks and even months to prepare. It is well to have such a studied discourse—the results of one's best thinking and most careful scholarship—always on the stocks. It is well, while a student is in the seminary, for him to write some such sermons, embodying the results of his theological and philological studies as well as life-long religious experience. They form a good capital. They lie like investments in the bank that may be drawn from now and then, and that always yield good interest.

But a man should be so constant a student of the Bible, and, we might add, so thoroughly versed in theological studies, as to be able, on an emergency, to draw out quite rapidly a clear and instructive sermon on almost any practical topic. *The main difficulty is in making himself intellectually and spiritually a preacher*; then the individual sermon comes readily and as a matter of course. But one should learn his trade. He should know how to compose sermons. He should be always thinking upon his sermon-work. Life is so short, and man's powers so limited, that he can do but one thing well, and the preacher should therefore not expect to do aught else but preach. This continual labor bestowed upon the composition of sermons is very taxing at first, but it will grow easier (though perhaps never easy) as one grows to have power in the pulpit, and the way opens to freedom, light, and success. As one gets nearer to souls, he is repaid for his anxious thought. Young preachers, in fact all preachers who have not learned the best methods, are apt to be dreamers in their studies. They think that musing on a text, or a doctrine, as a subject of thought, is thinking upon it, is investigating it, is developing it into clear forms of instruction and edifying lessons of duty and salvation. Something more is needed than musing.

We will only add, in regard to the difficulties of preach-

ing, and the hard labor which it involves, that an enthusiasm for our work will, with God's help, carry us through it ; and the work will be found to be sweet, the sweetest of all works, the fullest of reward and true satisfaction.

In this connection it is well also to look at some of the prevalent faults of preaching, so that one may avoid them in his preparation for the pulpit.

2. Faults of preaching.—Among the most prominent of these may be mentioned (1) preaching without a strong impelling purpose. To preach merely to serve a professional necessity, or to provide a discourse for the Sunday service, is surely an unworthy object ; for there should be in every sermon some definite purpose to convert men and to build them up in the faith of the gospel. There should be a solemn feeling of responsibility to God, who has set us in the ministry to be fishers of men and not fishers for our selfish interests. In his preaching the true preacher grasps men's spirits and draws them unto Christ, that they may be warmed into new life ; and there should be this spiritual grasp in every sermon, this laying hold of the souls of men to bring them to Jesus Christ that they may truly live. "The Judge standeth at the door."

**Faults of  
preaching.**

(2.) Preaching abstruse and learnedly expressed sermons. A sermon should be intensive rather than extensive or pretensive ; there should be in it more pith and point than elaborate argumentation. While a sermon should always have that in it which appeals to the reason, for religious truth, as well as natural truth, is a matter of thought, and is cognizable in so far as it is rational and appeals to the laws of the mind, yet a sermon is not a mere argument. It is a thoughtful and earnest presentation of truth, drawn with care and faithfulness from the Scriptures, in forms of the most effective speech, and in-

tended, in its language and illustrations, to reach the popular mind, and to persuade men—men of all classes and divers characters—to a certain course of action for their highest good ; since their understandings often may be convinced—are perhaps so already—while their wills are to be turned, and their affections attracted by and fastened on higher objects. The sermon is a religious address designed for a definite end, and not a religious treatise, saying all that can be said in the way of discussion upon a given theme. A common audience does not come together to follow out the painfully extended and intricate processes of a subtle and analytic mind ; and so also a too discursive style, which sweeps over a vast deal of ground, which deals with truth philosophically and abstractly, merely as a theme of learned research or even of interesting thought, and not plainly and pointedly, wastes the precious time allotted in the on-rush of this world's life to the preacher of truth. There may be learning and the results of critical scholarship in the discourse ; but the sermon should not have the tone of learning, for learning deals with the past, and “knowledge should be turned into life.” The divinely *practical* element in a sermon should sweep everything along with it. One should not stop to exhibit his learning ; and of what great importance is it, after all, to one who has a higher end in view ; who has to gain his hearer and persuade him to serve the Lord ? We would make a difference between learning and scholarship, as they are manifested in sermon-writing. We need the last ; but we should not exhibit the first ; or, to quote from Mr. Ruskin upon a different theme, “The artist need not be a learned man ; in all probability it will be a disadvantage to him to become so ; but he ought, if possible, to be

an educated man ; that is, one who has understanding of his own uses and duties in the world, and therefore of the general nature of the things done and existing in the world, and who has so trained himself or been trained, as to turn to the best account whatever faculties or knowledge he has. The mind of an educated man is greater than the knowledge it possesses ; it is like the vault of heaven, encompassing the earth which lives and flourishes beneath it ; but the mind of an uneducated and learned man is like an India-rubber band, with an everlasting spirit of contraction in it, fastening together papers which it cannot open and keeps from being opened."

(3.) Preaching sermons addressed to the fancy and the nervous sensibilities. This is what Shakespeare would call "taffeta-writing." It is not dealing with plain thought, from which true ideas are evolved, and true principles brought out ; but it is striving to rival brilliant and popular lecturers, who, by continually working upon their lectures, have made them like polished gems, and have taken everything out of them which is not brilliant and immediately effective. It is also what is commonly called "sensational preaching ;" since it is determining to produce a sensation on the nerves by words, rather than on the conscience and heart by thought and feeling. It is writing from the motive of exciting men for the moment, and of catching their attention by novelties, rather than of doing them good for eternity. And it is also appealing to a lower class of motives, leaving men's higher nature untouched. It is true that the mass of men will be attracted by this style, and perhaps encourage it ; and yet, sooner or later, even they will tire of it ; for it is turning the sanctuary into a lecture-hall or theatre ; and the results of this kind of preaching are



indeed as superficial as those of the popular lecturer and player ; for if there are conversions, they are of a doubtful sort, it being poor seed sown in bad soil. In the words of another writer, “ This whole business of preaching and hearing for entertainment may be told in these two words, ‘ deceiving and being deceived.’ ” We do not say that a preacher should not attract his audience, nor, if he has anything original in thought, or powerful in imagination, or moving in truth, that he should repress it ; on the contrary, let him be himself ; let him use every power that he possesses ; let his thought be fresh, and let him make a sensation if he can ; but let him not preach for the special purpose of making a sensation, of captivating, entertaining, exciting, drawing. How wasteful the efforts of such a preacher ! How terrible the responsibility he incurs ! If the objection be urged that the sermon of an opposite character fails to interest an audience, it springs probably from other reasons : the preacher has, perhaps, failed to inspire a true and manly taste in his congregation ; he does not put genuine thought, feeling, or spiritual earnestness into his preaching ; there is nothing to attract in it ; there is no unction ; he copies his ideas and feigns his emotions, and how can he create a legitimate interest in this way ? The preacher should therefore resist the temptation (which is one of the first to assail him) to make a fine, attractive sermon ; but let him rather strive to make a *plain* one, and if there is aught of literary or awakening power in him, it will shine out in due time. In saying this we would not be understood as saying anything against pulpit eloquence ; but it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between the true and the false—the true sensational and the false sensational. We find no fault with him who strives, for the sake of truth, to say a thing elo-

quently ; but if he says anything in order to be eloquent, to make himself attractive, to build up his reputation, to produce an excitement for his or its own sake, to gain the name of an eloquent preacher, to make preaching a vehicle for personal and popular influence—here we detect the false style ; it is thoroughly and in the lowest sense human and not divine.

In regard to preaching to the emotions—this is an important question by itself. There is certainly a true and

**Preaching to the emotions.** legitimate preaching addressed to the emotional nature, and all true preaching aims

more or less directly to reach the feelings, which in one sense lie at the root of religion, since religion is a want, a desire, a yearning of the heart before it secures a thought or an intellectual conception. Preaching is not merely a calm, unimpassioned, intellectual presentation of truth, arousing no sensibility and producing no mental excitation. On the contrary, it ought to awaken feeling of the right kind. Feeling is not what we should fear, but feeling of a false kind, springing from superficial sensibilities and wrong motives, or from a wrong way of appealing to the religious sensibilities. The true principle in regard to preaching to the emotions seems to be this, that the mere aim to arouse feeling through preaching—making that the object—is not enough ; but the aim of the preacher should be to awaken that genuine and profound feeling which leads the mind to act—the feeling itself being of little value which does not end in a determination or action. We must make men feel to make them act. So sodden are they in sin, so hardened in worldliness, prejudice, and error, that they must be made to fear, yearn, desire, perhaps agonize with desire, before they will be moved to seek God and truly repent. The fires must be kindled in

the depth of the soul before its silent machinery will begin to operate, and before it will make any true advance toward God and a better life. But feeling that does not tend to action, that ends only in itself, that has no real influence on the soul's choices, that does not lead to repentance, faith, and holiness, that is but a temporary thing, that is a fire blazing up and then going out—that is not a worthy end of preaching—it is sensational preaching of the false kind ; and it may be the occasion of incalculable mischief, even as a burned district in the woods lies barren and waste for years.

In order to produce this true emotion, of which we speak, the preacher (as the familiar Horatian rule is) must himself feel. The French preacher De Ravignan, in a passage before quoted, says : “ To produce emotion we must feel it. Do not hesitate to give yourselves full scope ; speak directly to the passions, to every tone by turn ; by unlooked-for strokes move the depths of your hearers' hearts.”

(4.) Preaching unstudied and loose-jointed sermons. Antiquity and the authority of the Scriptures have made preaching on the Lord's day a matter of great and eternal moment, a reasoning of God with man, “ the savor of life unto life, or the savor of death unto death.”

True preaching must, therefore, still continue to be thoughtful, profound, authoritative ; it doubtless may and should have more of popular application, naturalness, and life than it sometimes has ; it may and should come down to the sympathies and comprehensions of all men ; but the preparation for the pulpit should be a severe exercise, and the sermon should deal seriously with great thoughts, principles, and themes ; it should not play with them.

De Ravignan, again, says to young preachers in regard

to writing sermons, " Draw up a plan, lay down the course of the ideas, their advance from one to another, their final effect. This is what is most important, it is almost all. The writing is nothing when the work is performed. We must not fear trouble. Be laborious, patient, enduring ; at this price you will gain that fulness of force which convinces and persuades. The labor of composition should be a martyrdom, and ought to be felt to be such, for without this an apostolic life is worth little or nothing. Trouble must be taken if we hope to do any good. What fatigue and dejection ! Often sluggishness and inability will fill the mind ; there will be no results. It is well ; it makes us humble and devout. In these times we have recourse to God. We must, of course, employ, spend all that we have. We could scarcely wish to have genius save for the purpose of glorifying God by saving souls, for without this, genius is nothing. Talent, at least, of whatever sort, we must employ, but trample it beneath our feet. We ought to wish to succeed, to do well, very well. Listen to the fertile maxim addressed to us by St. Ignatius : ' We must do everything as if we were doing it alone, and look to God for all success, as if we had done nothing.' He says again : ' For the pulpit toil is everything ; while sloth, on the contrary, hinders all success.' "

Let us, then, ever strive to avoid this fault of composing too easy and off-hand sermons, that cost us little or no hard thinking. Let us shun this fatal habit of facility. The age demands thought. Let us resolve to give the best labor of our minds to this work, even if we do not and cannot always make great sermons.

But, is it objected, how can a minister, with all his other duties, prepare two such thoughtful and faithful sermons a week ? This is a chronic question, and we can



answer it only by asking another, "How have the best preachers done this?" In some way or another they have contrived to preach solidly, attractively, effectively, twice on Sunday, and every time they preach. Whitefield preached, on an average, ten times a week, for the space of thirty-four years, and John Wesley nearly the same number for a much longer time; and Wesley's sermons, if not Whitefield's, were carefully composed. A young minister doubtless has a difficult task at first; but by the habitual and systematic study of the Scriptures, by severe labor, by occasional exchanges, by sometimes repeating his sermons, and by not preaching more than twice on Sunday, he can accomplish this, as others have done. And, as a general rule, let him preach reasonably short sermons, if at the same time they are good sermons. After all that has been said about putting honest work into our sermons, this will not be misunderstood. But there is a prevalent fallacy that the longer a sermon the more thought it has. On the contrary, it may be very long and very dull. It may be *vox et præterea nihil*—nothing but words. Surely, if a dull sermon, the longer it is the worse it is. A short sermon, too, may be vapid—may amount to nothing—but if full of force and thought, a short sermon is better than a long one. Where both are good, a short one is the better. Attention is not wearied and impression is not effaced. Macaulay says that at the famous trial of the seven bishops, Lord Somers, then a young man, arose and spoke a little over five minutes, and his reputation as one of the most eloquent orators of England was established. Put thirty for five and the preacher need not err greatly. One thought, one duty, fully handled, fully illustrated, fully brought home to the conscience and heart, is enough for one sermon; and would that young ministers, as well as

older ones, could have the sagacity, humility, and independence to see and follow this rule !

As to the length of sermons, we would add a word. The history of this subject is somewhat suggestive as well as amusing. The sermons of the

**Length of  
sermons.**

first five centuries varied in length according to preacher, place, and circumstances, as they do now ; but Moule remarks (p. 56) that "as a general rule the discourses of the Greek fathers are the longer, and of the Latin fathers very considerably the shorter of the two. The delivery of the latter could rarely have occupied more than half an hour, often not more than ten minutes." Anselm is said to have given this advice, "*semi horae tempus communiter non excedat.*" In *Blackwood's Magazine* of February, 1869, there are some curious observations on the length of sermons. The writer says, "Sermons in early times seem to have been comparatively short. Some of these extant by the Latin fathers would not occupy, as they stand, more than ten minutes, or quarter of an hour ; many of Bede's consist only of a very few lines. Therefore we are not safe in resting upon such data—as these are evidently short-hand notes. Long sermons were the product of the post-reformation, especially of Puritan times. Yet some of the earlier divines were lengthy. Bishop Alcock preached at St. Mary's, Cambridge, "a good and pleasant sermon," which lasted from one o'clock to half past three. Sometimes the audiences in olden times, in England, scraped their feet and thus compelled the preacher to desist. The time was measured by the hour-glass standing on the pulpit, and when the hour was finished, the preacher turning it over would "invite his hearers to another glass." Bishop Alderson, however, was strongly opposed to long sermons ; when once asked his opinion as to the proper

length of a discourse, he answered, "twenty minutes, with a leaning to the side of mercy." Isaac Barrow's Spital sermon was three hours and a half long. Edward Irving, in later days, also preached a sermon of three hours and a half in length for the London Missionary Society, in Tottenham Court Road Chapel. He paused thrice, and the devout and patient congregation sang hymns in the interval, but they never forgave him that sermon." Perhaps the principle of Christian forgiveness could not apply in such a case. Notwithstanding, however, such exceptional cases, the testimony of history in all ages of the Christian Church is decidedly in favor of reasonably short sermons. There is, in fact, no rigid rule to be laid down ; subjects make their own time in treating them ; some subjects imperatively demand lengthy treatment ; but whatever our theory of preaching may be, whether we view preaching as a constituent part of worship, or simply as a didactic exercise, religious feeling and good sense point generally to a forcible brevity in preaching, though some topics will not suffer themselves to be handled in a short time. Mullois, in his "Pastor and People," says sensibly "Believe me, and I speak from experience, the more you say the less will the hearers retain ; the less you say the more they will profit. By dint of burdening their memory, you will overwhelm it ; just as a lamp is extinguished by feeding it with too much oil, and plants are choked by immoderate irrigation." When a sermon is too long, the end erases the middle from the memory, and the middle the beginning. Even mediocre preachers are acceptable, provided their discourses are short ; whereas even the best preachers are a burden when they speak too long. A Japanese proverb is to the effect that "few orators are sufficiently talented to speak a short discourse." Let us strive to be

weighty if we preach short sermons. Let us strive to pack more thought and fewer words into them, not forgetting the motto, "*si gravis brevis.*"

Luther's advice in homely German to a young preacher was, "*Tritt frisch auf—thus maul auf—hoor bald auf*" (Stand up cheerily—speak out manfully—leave off speedily).

3. Process of composing a sermon.—We have no intention of attempting to lay down an invariable method of composing sermons. One man will have one method and another another, the greatest variety and individuality in the treatment of divine truth is to be encouraged; it is a blessed thing that we now and then have a Bushnell or a Phillips Brooks in the pulpit, as well as a Kirk or a Spurgeon. Earnestness and brains will make their own methods; but we would simply now offer a hint or two that may possibly be useful to beginners.

Process of  
composing a  
sermon.

We will, in the first place, quote two or three passages from Dr. Alexander's "Thoughts on Preaching:"

"I wish I could make sermons as if I had never heard or read how they are made by other people. The formation of regular divisions and applications is deadly."

"In writing or speaking, throw off all restraint. Writing from a pre-composed skeleton is eminently restraining. It forces one to parcel out his matter in a forced, Procrustean way. The current is often thus stopped at the very moment when it begins to gush. The ideal of a discourse is that of a flow from first to last."

"The true way is to have an object, and to be full of it. I never could understand what is meant by making a sermon on a prescribed text. The right text is one which comes of itself during reading and meditation; which accompanies you in walks, goes to bed with you,



and rises with you. On such a text thoughts swarm and cluster like bees upon a branch. The sermon ferments for hours and days, and at length, after patient waiting and almost spontaneous working, the subject clarifies itself, and the true method of treatment presents itself in a shape which cannot be rejected."

In these remarks there is much truth, and they are eminently suggestive ; but we might be allowed to differ from them in some particulars, especially in regard to the use of a plan. We agree entirely with the advice that the plan should not be made to restrain or confine the thought ; it should not be the rigid application of the rule and square to every sermon ; but it is nevertheless useful as a means of arranging thought, and of employing our material to the best advantage.

The ability to methodize thought is a great power. If the preacher wishes to produce a permanent impression he must cultivate the methodizing and organizing power, the skill to group his ideas to the best advantage. He must train himself in planning for an end, and in carefully following the right processes necessary to the attaining of that end. This, to be sure, belongs more especially to the art of preaching—to its artistic side ; but it is not without its moral benefits ; and when one has trained himself to think with method ; when he has cultivated himself in his own art so that he is at home in it, so that he is skillful in laying out his materials for sermons, as an engineer is in making surveys, or a general in mapping out the plan of a battle, then he thinks less about the mere art ; and his spiritual emotions run freely in these prescribed channels. Professor Shedd justly commends the forming of what he calls " a homiletical habit ;" and his words are so valuable—we think none more so in his book—that we would quote them in full.

“ The preacher ought to acquire and cultivate a homiletical habitude. Preaching is his business. For this he has educated himself, and to this he has consecrated his whole life. It should, therefore, obtain undisputed possession of his mind and his culture. He ought not (save in peculiar cases) to pursue any other intellectual calling than that of sermonizing. He may, therefore, properly allow this species of authorship to monopolize all his discipline and acquisitions. It is as fitting that the preacher should be characterized by a homiletical tendency, as that the poet should be characterized by a poetical tendency. If it is proper that the poet should transmute everything that he touches into poetry, it is not less proper that the preacher should transmute everything that he touches into sermon.

“ This homiletical habit will appear in a disposition to construct plans, to examine and criticise discourses with respect to their logical structure. The preacher’s mind becomes habitually organific. It is inclined to build. Whenever leading thoughts are brought into the mind, they are straightway disposed and arranged into the unity of a plan, instead of being allowed to lie here and there, like scattered boulders on a field of drift. This homiletic habit will appear, again, in a disposition to render all the argumentative and illustrative materials which pour in upon the educated man, from the various fields of science, literature, and art, subservient to the purpose of preaching. The sermonizer is, or should be, a student, and an industrious one, a reader, and a thoughtful one. He will consequently, in the course of his studies, meet with a great variety of information that may be advantageously employed in sermonizing, either as proof or illustration, provided he possesses the proper power to elaborate it, and work it up. Now, if he has acquired this homiletical

mental habit, this tendency to sermonize, all this material, which would pass through another mind without assimilation, will be instantaneously and constantly taken up and wrought into the substance and form of sermons; and will make themselves manifest in plans, metaphors, illustrations, etc., in the preacher's commonplace book."<sup>1</sup>

Before giving any suggestions as to the process of sermon-making (which will be indeed but brief hints, for, in discussing the structure and composition of a sermon we shall soon enter more particularly into this whole subject), we would call attention to a note by Dr. Gregory, the biographer of Robert Hall, on Robert Hall's method of composing his sermons. "That course was, very briefly to sketch, commonly upon a sheet of letter-paper (in some cases rather more fully), the plan of the proposed discourse, marking the divisions, specifying a few texts and sometimes writing a few sentences; especially on those points where an argument could not be adequately stated without great technical correctness of language. This he regarded as 'digging a channel for his thoughts to flow in.' Then, calling into exercise the power of abstraction, which he possessed in a degree I never saw equalled, he would, whether alone or not, pursue his trains of thought, retrace and extend them until the whole were engraven on his mind; and, when once so fixed in their entire connection, they were never after obliterated. The result was on all occasions the same: so that, without recurring to the ordinary expedients, or loading his memory with words and phrases, he uniformly brought his mind, with an unburdened vigor and elasticity, to bear upon its immediate purpose, recalling his selected train of thought, and communicating it to others,

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<sup>1</sup> Shedd's "Homiletics," p. 108.

in diction the most felicitous, appropriate, and expressive. This was uniformly the case with regard to the tenor and substance of his discourses ; but the most striking and impressive passages were often, strictly speaking, extemporaneous.”<sup>1</sup>

Let us suppose that in studying or reading the Scriptures, a text has suggested itself as an appropriate theme of discourse, although we know that there is no rule in the manner and mode of these suggestions ; for the subject of a sermon may come to one in travelling, or upon a walk, or in pastoral visitation, or upon his bed, or at the bedside of the sick, almost as readily as in the study ; yet texts and subjects of preaching that are suggested to one *in his regular daily study and meditation of the Word of God*, are certainly the truest, richest, and most profitable subjects for preaching ; for they seem thus to come to us by the direct inspiration of the Word and Spirit of God.

**Hints as to  
method of  
composition.**

Having thus fixed upon a text, we would make everything—first, last, and middle—of the study of the text. We have spoken already of interpretation as a matter of primary importance. Interpretation is the main pillar in any true homiletical system. The inspiration of the preacher is to be derived from the word of God. It is not to be derived from other books. Not only a study of the text, but, as has been said, a systematic study of the Scriptures—daily, weekly, yearly, pursuing some plan of biblical study—is needed to make the best and most useful kind of sermons. The exact meaning of the original text, then, should first of all be obtained. The mind should be filled with its teaching, and afterward there may be its application made to human hearts,

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<sup>1</sup> “ Life and Works of Robert Hall,” Eng. ed., v. i. p. 9.



with fresh illustrations drawn from the study and knowledge of men, addressing them in ways and forms that common men understand—making the old truth to burn anew in their minds, and to meet them in their everyday thoughts and avocations ; doing this with a supreme reliance on the Spirit of God—this, we think, is the right way to preach.

But a positive portion of divine truth, a definite subject, drawn from the patient study of the text, has thus, it is supposed, been presented to the mind, which must have something to work upon ; for thought depends upon knowledge, and reasoning is simply a deduction from previous facts of which the knowing faculties have taken cognizance. Now, although the subject is thus before the mind, the simple theme is not itself sufficient to keep the mind working ; for to begin at once to write upon this subject is preposterous ; to catch up an idea, or half idea, and compose an edifying discourse upon it, without more study and reflection, is to heap up words without wisdom.

After obtaining the theme, the first thing to do is to learn something about it ; to read, to investigate, to think upon it ; to draw out from the best sources, and all sources, the real knowledge of the subject ; to recall, revolve, and develop it by patient thought. The idea which is contained within the text may be taken out of its immediate connection with the text, and conceived of in its wider revelations with other truth ; and not only the reasons for, but the objections that may be brought against it, may be contemplated. The subject should be looked at in its whole length and depth ; all the possible side-light should be let in ; and thus the mind works in and through it till the whole is leavened, till the simple thought is fully developed.

All this, perhaps, may be done (if one is preparing a written sermon) without putting pen to paper ; for the great thing is to get the mind thoroughly aroused, every faculty of it, and all directed to one particular object. This is the momentum which is required to carry one through. And this should not be a mere intellectual excitement ; it should be the stirring of the depths of the nature and of the soul.

“ A purely intellectual force may arrest and interest an audience, but taken by itself it cannot persuade their wills or melt their hearts. The best sermons of a preacher are generally those composed under the impulse of a lively state of religious feeling.”

We would also add that the thought of the *audience* should be always present—the great object for which the sermon is composed—the particular persons it may be that it is designed to reach, so that this human element should run like a warm, vitalizing current through all the processes of writing, and preparing to write, and the preacher in this way will not fall into scholastic methods. He will not be taken up with the development of the thought merely, but with its application to men, and to the great ends of preaching,

When one is ready to compose his sermon, the books he has read, the commentaries he has consulted, the notes he has made, might be laid aside for a little while, in order to give the mind time to recover its independent tone and action, and to think for itself. At this stage we would suggest that one should rapidly write down his ideas, and the thoughts he has collected together or originated upon the subject, however diverse from each other, and without any particular regard to connection, or arrangement. Say to one's self “ what definite thoughts, after all this study and investigation, have I

really gathered on this subject?" If there is anything so gained, no matter what it is, let him put it down; and these more or less disconnected thoughts will form the nucleus of the sermon, out of which order will finally spring; this is the first step out of confusion toward order; and in this process the inner connections of ideas will begin to manifest themselves more clearly.

By this time (and this may not be a long time) one is ready to form something like a plan, because now he has the materials to do it with. No true sermon springs out of a plan, but a plan springs out of study and thought, and it is merely a help in the orderly development of a sermon. The difficulty concerning a plan has generally arisen from supposing that inspiration comes from the plan. Not at all; *a plan is but an aid to guide and regulate thought, and not an original source of thought*; and we would, therefore, not entirely dispense with a plan; for both nature and reason teach us that it is indispensable. Is not creation—God's discourse—carried out on a plan? So every true work should have a plan, an inner unity, some one idea to be developed, some one aim to be attained; and that should guide and shape every subordinate detail to the furthest and minutest ramification of the theme. As to the sermon Bourdaloue said: "I can forgive a bad sermon sooner than I can forgive a bad outline." And how often a sermon that contains excellent thoughts, the fruit of laborious study, yet falls absolutely without effect upon the audience; and the reason of this is that the thoughts are not well arranged, that they are mixed up, or are put in some unnatural and illogical order. A little labor spent in reconstructing the plan, would make all the difference between an effective and an ineffective discourse.

Place of a  
plan.

A word still further as to plans. Are we to have one plan and no other, dividing a subject up into regular divisions, two or three, or four or thirty, as some old sermons were divided—with formal phrases to connect, and the gaunt ribs of the skeleton sticking out—with the introduction just so long, and the proposition in just such a place, and every transition regularly parcelled out and numbered, and the application in a stereotyped form of words, first to sinners then to saints, or *vice versâ*? Heaven forbid! We would go so far as to say that no two sermons should or could have precisely the same plan. This, I know, is contrary to the regular line of homiletical suggestion, but be it so. We would have every variety of plan—indeed the text or the theme makes the plan; all we contend for is, that there should be some clear and thoughtful method of setting forth truth to the mind. A sermon cannot be written confusedly, without method or purpose. It must be a work of thorough, sometimes painful preparation. We would make here one main suggestion in regard to the plan of a sermon, and that is that the plan should never be one of entirely artificial construction, or one superimposed upon the subject; but a natural plan, or one growing out of the subject itself. It cannot thus be the first thing made. The plan should be simply the natural and logical order of thought which every subject, when rightly treated, contains within itself. It is the true development of the thought. We would therefore abjure the whole race of skeletons. We would throw contempt upon plans made to order. If a preacher is forced to take some other man's plan, and cannot make one for himself, the best plan he can adopt is to give up preaching and find out another way of doing good. But to return from this digression.

In the mean time, while the mind is busy in moulding



and fusing what has been thus rudely thrown together into some degree of just quantity and proportion ; truly it were well if the ordering, guiding, and illumining Spirit were invoked to one's aid. The religious energies should have ample opportunity to warm and act upon the subject-matter of thought, and the mind should be kindled with the love of Christ, and filled with the truth; for no sermon should be written without prayer, since no true sermon, even if it is not divinely originated and inspired, should fail to be guided by the Spirit of divine wisdom, truth, and grace. It is, moreover, a product of all the energies and affections of the mind, and not of the intellect only.

Then, taking hold of it with interest and with absorbed attention, one should compose as rapidly as possible, with a glow of mind, without the least constraint or care for rhetorical rules, not stopping for a moment to correct or improve. Write a sermon sometimes at one sitting. Movement is a great element in preaching as well as in everything else that has life and purpose in it. This rapidity is important for the unity and life of a discourse ; for, let the gold simmer ever so long, at last it should run out in a continuous stream.

The finishing of a sermon is a matter requiring more care, time, and deliberation. Lord Brougham wrote the peroration of his argument on the trial of Queen Caroline twenty times ; and even a genius like Goethe said that " nothing came to him in his sleep."

Now, it is said, would you set this forth as the invariable method of making a sermon, or of preparing to preach ? By no means. This is but one method, and it has a more particular and distinct reference to the written and topical discourse. Different men have different ways of preparation for preaching ; let each one follow his own

method. We throw this out only as a hint toward some practical way of proceeding to make a sermon, since the question is frequently asked by the theological student, "How shall I go to work to write a sermon?" But when the sermon is finished by the exercise of one's best powers, let it be finished, and let not the mind continually worry itself because it has not reached its ideal. Apelles, the ancient Greek painter, said, "he knew when to leave off—an art that Protogenes did not know." One's aim may be high; but when he has made an honest effort to reach it he should be satisfied; for the mind may become absolutely morbid upon this point, and may maunder over its imperfect productions, when the manlier way is to say nothing and to write better sermons.

## FOURTH DIVISION.

### ANALYSIS AND COMPOSITION OF SERMON.

#### SEC. 13. *The Text.*

The partitioning of the sermon proper into so many separate parts, such as text, introduction, argument, etc., has reference, not so much to the voluntary as to the involuntary plan of the discourse, **Introductory remarks.** or to those constituent elements of a discourse which absolutely demand attention in constructing a sermon. These, however, need not be distinctly and formally expressed in every sermon ; but they belong to the essential structure, the osseous framework as well as the complete development of every intelligible discourse, which must be made conformable to the laws of the human mind. In any formal address we cannot dispense with such grand divisions as the introduction, the argument, and the conclusion ; for every true discourse must have at least a beginning, a middle, and an end ; and the beginning and end are naturally of less dimensions than the middle. In like manner every human frame has a head, body, and extremities ; every rock has a foot, middle, and summit ; every tree has a root, trunk, and crown.

Vinet's analysis of a sermon, in his homiletics, is somewhat technical, and comprises the following parts : 1. The Subject or the Text ; 2. The Homily or Paraphrase ; 3. The Matter ; 4. The Explication ; 5. The Proof.

A less formal and technical, but more familiar and extended analysis, would be the following, which we shall

adopt : 1. The Text ; 2. The Introduction ; 3. The Explanation ; 4. The Proposition ; 5. The Division ; 6. The Development ; 7. The Conclusion.

This general method of partitioning a sermon varies, of course, in different sermons. It depends, in fact, upon the nature of the discourse itself, which develops its outward form according to its internal law, and has, or should have, an individual organic unity.

It is our intention to exhibit, not the invariable form of every individual sermon, but rather the parts that legitimately enter into, and that generally should and do enter into, the composition of a well-constructed sermon. We shall try to present the ideal sermon in all its parts ; and although the logical method of partition is regarded, it is chiefly the rhetorical, or the practical, or, more truly still, the natural order that will guide us ; for, to use Vinet's words, "the dynamical is preferable to the mechanical style of sermon."

We therefore now come first to speak of that fundamental portion of the sermon from which it is originated, and on which it is based—the Text. Strictly speaking, the text is not the sermon, but rather forms the subject or material, out of which the sermon is drawn ; but, as it is connected with every portion of the sermon, and has so vital a part to play, we prefer, for convenience' sake at least, to look at it as one of the great component parts of the sermon.

The Text, from *texo*, "to weave," or *textus*, a "web," is that which forms the "web" or "tissue," or "main thread" of the discourse. The "text" of a sermon is, of course, some genuine word of Scripture ; although the Bible itself, as a whole, is eminently "the Text."

As to the origin of and authority for the use of texts in



preaching, we certainly find some reason for the general principle of employing a portion of Scripture as the ground-work of discourse, in the Old Testament, as in Nehemiah 8 : 8, "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading ;" and also in the New Testament, in our Lord's example in Luke 4 : 16-27, and in the example of the apostles in Acts 13 : 15-44, and Acts 15 : 30, and in other places. The basis of the apostles' preaching was usually some lesson read from the law or the prophets ; and as has been said, "even if Christ and his apostles did not strictly conform themselves to the use of texts, it may be answered that they, in their preaching, furnished the texts for us."

**Origin of and  
authority  
for use of  
texts.**

While the general historical use of texts, or the founding of the sermon directly upon the word of God, is to be traced back to the earliest ages, the use of the single brief text in the more confined manner of our times, as standing for the particular theme of the discourse, is ascribed to the Presbyter Musaeus of Marseilles, in the fifth century. It was, however, by no means the uniform custom of preachers in the first centuries, nor even down to the time of the Reformation, to employ specific texts in preaching, although about the time of Luther the custom was quite generally adopted.

"In the Christian Church, the use of a passage of Scripture as the ground of a discourse, an 'auctoritee,' as Chaucer tells us it was called in his time, is, probably coeval with the set discourse itself ; though, in the sermons of the great preachers, both of the Eastern and Western churches, we find sometimes two texts prefixed, and sometimes none at all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Moore's "Thoughts on Preaching," p, 78.

The fact is, that the use of a text or of a definite portion or lesson of Scripture, as the theme of Christian preaching, has come down to us from the earliest times, and it has not been seriously opposed, because it seems so in harmony with the great design of preaching, which is the interpretation and the publication of the divine word to men. The text in ancient times consisted of a longer passage than is now used, since expository preaching was the prevailing style ; but, in the seventeenth century, in England, the practice of brief texts was common. Thus some preachers would write a dozen or twenty sermons on a very short passage of Scripture ; but now a reaction is going on toward the use of longer texts again ; which is a healthy reaction.

As to the objections to the use of texts, Vinet himself says that " what gives a Christian character to a sermon

is not the use of a text, but the spirit of the preacher." <sup>1</sup>

**Objections to the use of texts.**

He says also, " the use of isolated texts, joined to the necessity of never preaching without a text, has certainly in its rigor and absoluteness something false, something servile, which narrows the field, confuses the thought, puts restraint upon the individuality of the preacher." <sup>2</sup> For a perfect defence of the use of texts, he thinks that every text should contain a complete subject, and every subject should find a complete text. As every sermon, he argues, rests upon a thesis, which is an abstract truth complete in itself ; then a text, to be what it should be, should contain a perfect theme ; and few texts do this. Vinet, however, on the whole, argues for the use of texts, as a custom sanctified by the practice of the Church, and as affording more

<sup>1</sup> " Homiletics," p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Vinet, " Homiletics," p. 81.

advantages than disadvantages. But to bring these objections into more specific statements :

I. The use of a text prevents the unity of the discourse. One must follow and explain his text, however he may violate the rules of rhetorical art. Here the objection rests upon the fact that the sermon is to be necessarily built upon the rules of classical eloquence, is to be a perfect discourse, preserving the unities of ancient art. But this idea of a sermon, even if admissible, was, as we have seen in the lectures upon the history of preaching, one of later introduction, and did not belong to it originally, and is not essential to it ; its essence being simply an address aiming to bring the message of God to bear effectively upon the minds and hearts of the people.

But even if the sermon be a true oration, it may be said that the orators of antiquity had no infallible truth to speak from as a basis ; if they had possessed this, they would doubtless have reasoned from it. All writings to them were of no higher authority than their own thoughts ; they had no inspired word of wisdom to draw from. Yet, as a matter of fact, the practice of speaking from some text, or definite proposition, was frequently the custom of Greek and Roman orators. Demosthenes almost always spoke upon some special summons, or indictment, or carefully-worded motion, introduced into a deliberative assembly, which served him for a text. And this has continued to be the custom in forensic and parliamentary address formed upon classic models ; men speak to a point of law, a special motion or resolution, or else their speaking lacks definiteness and unity.

But we argue further that the true use of the text positively does promote the unity of a sermon. The main truth of the text, however complex the passage may be, should

form the directive and unifying law of the sermon. It is not a true sermon which simply presents the exegesis of the text—which merely explains it ; but that is a true sermon which develops the text, and which is moulded in all its parts by one organic principle of life that springs from the inspired word.

2. That the use of a text confines the discourse. The idea is, that a short text cannot afford enough matter for a long discourse ; and thus the mind of the speaker must be continually fettered by the narrow requirements of his text ; it cannot act with perfect freedom.

One answer to this is, that it is a good thing to compel the speaker to concentrate his thoughts and to restrain himself from rambling discourse. This is not an enfeebling but an enriching process. One goes over less surface, but he sinks deeper. We answer again that there are few texts which do not contain the substance of more truth and of larger discourse than most men are capable of drawing from them. This objection is founded on the idea that the Scriptures are a book, like a human book, capable of exhaustion. Besides this, the literal and servile following out of a passage is not required. This following out of a text, word by word, and step by step, without an inner grasp of its meaning, is, after all, but a superficial treatment of it ; it is what Hagenbach calls " mosaic-preaching," or making small bits of sermons on every member of the text—arranging these along together, sticking them side by side—and not one sermon, embracing the truth of the whole of it. The text need exert no tyranny over the free thought of him who has comprehended its spirit, and seized upon its true meaning and scope. His mind is inspired and freed, rather than hampered.

Palmer, the German writer on homiletics, remarks on



this point, that a true text cannot be compared to a vessel, or cask, which the preacher is to draw from until he exhausts it ; it is rather a spring of limitless resource, because it is a thought of God. If this were not so, then but one sermon, by an able preacher, could be preached upon it. It would thus be closed to another preacher's attempting to use it ; but, on the contrary, the same preacher at different times and in different moods may preach entirely different discourses from the same text. He looks at the truth from various sides and aspects. One can, in fact, always find something new in the same passage.

3. Texts cannot be found which form perfect theses for all subjects important to be discussed in the pulpit. This is really the main stress of Vinet's objection. We answer that the Bible contains the seeds of all religious truth, or else it is not a sufficient revelation. It may be that the truth is sometimes contained in a concrete form in the Scriptures ; but this is better than an abstract form for the preacher, because it is vital and suggestive. It may stand thus as a generic truth that can be analyzed and applied ; or as a specific truth, presenting at least one aspect of the subject, which has a root in the general principle, and which thus legitimately opens to the discussion of the whole theme.

All these and other objections will vanish when we regard the minister in his true light, as an interpreter of the word of God to men. Whether conformed to classical or unclassical rules, the minister's responsibility is to make known to men the will of God, and this will is contained most perfectly in the Scriptures ; and although he may preach the word of God sometimes without taking a text from the Bible, yet so long as he is a minister of the word, he will not find a subject proper to be

preached upon for which he cannot find a legitimate text in the Scriptures.

Let us, on the other hand, look at the true design and advantages of the use of texts. They are chiefly fourfold.

**Design and advantages of the use of texts.** 1. The use of the text has the sanction of an ancient and consecrated custom. It is the way in which the Christian Church has been taught the word of God, and the way in which the truth has been preached to men from the earliest times, and it has therefore accumulated power and solemnity. What possible gain, then, would there be in cutting loose from this ancient custom of founding the instruction of the pulpit upon a definite portion of the word of God, and of delivering a religious essay or address from an independent and human point of view?

2. The use of the text serves to interpret and explain the Scriptures. This is nearly all the Bible truth that some hearers get in the course of their lives; and this is the way that they learn what is contained in the Bible. A clearer understanding of the Scriptures is thus promoted; and this we look upon as the great advantage of having a definite passage of the word of God to preach upon. The use of the text seems to remind the preacher of his chief responsibility as a minister of the word. Every text he chooses says to him, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee. Preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus the Lord." And one text often comprehends a whole system of truth, the whole of Christianity—as the entire arch of heaven is said to be reflected in a drop of dew.

3. The use of the text lends a divine sanction to the sermon. It recognizes the authority of the word of God as the basis of all true preaching, and the truth itself

has a converting power. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." "Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The use of the text as the foundation of the sermon leads us to see and feel that it is the authoritative message of God, not the doubtful word of man, which is set forth. This gives the preacher a more than personal authority, and it has also a reactive influence upon the hearer, awakening in him a renewed reverence for God and his word, which perhaps had become dulled. He is put in mind that there is a sure word of prophecy given from heaven to men, an infallible standard of faith and practice by which at last he shall be judged.

4. The use of the text serves to introduce and limit the subject of discourse. It obliges the preacher, or should do so, to have a definite subject of remark, and it affords, too, a better subject than the preacher, even if left to himself, would probably choose for the spiritual instruction of his hearers. And with the whole Bible to select from, so rich and copious in every kind of theme for instruction and spiritual nourishment, the preacher need never be at a loss for subjects; the great trouble is to choose among the multitude of subjects that the word of God presents. The proper use of texts is thus promotive of variety in preaching; for where the mind naturally runs into one track of thinking, the very responsibility laid upon the preacher to give

something like a comprehensive view of the word of God, compels him to choose a great variety of themes.

The use of a text gives a definite point of view from which to survey the vast riches of divine truth ; and not only a point of view, but, as one has said, of wonder and admiration. In fine, the advantages of the use of texts so greatly exceed the objections, that the custom doubtless will and should continue, although without any rigidly prescribed rule in the case. Claus Harms, who was theoretically opposed to the use of texts, fairly tried the experiment of doing without them ; and his expressed confession is that he would preach without a text only as an exceptional thing ; because without a text the congregation has no pledge that it is the word of God which is preached. He also said truly that a sermon could be very unbiblical which had a biblical text, and could be very biblical without a text ; but still, if one preaches from a biblical text unbiblically, then his text itself condemns him, and the unscripturalness of his sermon is made apparent by its unfaithfulness to the text.

The congregation, too, though little edified, will be less injured, because they can readily compare the text with the sermon, and see how far the preacher has erred.

Preaching, according to Palmer, represents the free personal element, while the text is the more limited or defined sphere, of divine truth in which this free personality exercises itself. This personality should never be so free or lawless as to go altogether outside of the truth, or to destroy the idea of a divine authority.

“ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

When a Christian worshipper goes into a Christian church on Sunday he wishes to go with the assurance that he is not to hear a merely human word preached, but a



word of the Lord authoritatively addressed to his soul, and powerful for its salvation and edification. This strengthens the Church's unity.

Athanase Coquerel says that it is too prevalent a custom, and also a very grave error, to attach so little importance as some do to the text in a sermon. With many of our modern preachers the text is only an epigraph, to be mentioned now and then, to be brought into the introduction and the conclusion, to be cited, perhaps, but not studied. But it is quite useless to put a text scrupulously at the head of a sermon in order to prove our respect for the Scriptures, if we do not also regard it as a word of revelation upon which the faith of Christians and of the Christian Church is founded, if the text is not regarded as an authority in our instruction, and if it is not carefully investigated and faithfully interpreted.

We would now consider the main principles to guide in the choice of texts. The selection of appropriate texts is a matter of great responsibility for the preacher; and he cannot do this perfectly well without some comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures, not merely an intellectual but a spiritual knowledge of their truths; nor without some wise, thoughtful, and conscientious principle of adaptation to the audience and the occasion.

**Main  
principles to  
guide in  
choice of  
texts.**

1. The text should be the word or a word of God. "If any man speak, let him speak according to the oracles of God."

All preaching should have a biblical truth, "a word of the Lord" in it; it should be a real *πρόφετεια*, springing from a divine, not human root. To illustrate this principle more carefully,

**The text  
should be a  
word of God.**

(a.) It should not be drawn from any apocryphal writing.

(b.) It should not be of doubtful authenticity.

How far texts should be chosen from books of whose canonical authorship, or even authenticity, there is more controversy than of others—as the books of Daniel, Ecclesiastes, Second of Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation—all we can say is, that English and American criticism has not yet reached the sublimate of German criticism ; for the critical faculty, rather than the faculty of faith—the faculty of believing as little as possible—has been developed in Germany during the last half century. The passion for scientific investigation should be subordinated in the preacher to the practical faculty. He should look for the word of God from every source, and in all its multiform modes of communication, rather than be continually striving to diminish and narrow down the field of inspired truth. Every book of the Bible, at least, stands upon its own evidences. The preacher should certainly examine those evidences with care ; but no book of Scripture has been left unassailed ; even the Gospel of John has been the theme of peculiar hostility. Shall we discontinue to take texts from John's Gospel, because, forsooth, this or that German critic has doubted its canonicity ? And so of the book of Hebrews, and of Revelation. Christianity does not fall even with these great books. Paul may not, indeed, have written the Epistle to the Hebrews, nor John, the apostle, the Apocalypse ; but does this controversy as to their authorship diminish their essential value ? and will the controversy be settled in our lives, and while the world stands ? Everything that has been assailed is not, for that reason, less true or divine. The proof of the inspiration of these books, both outward and inward, is overwhelmingly great,

far greater, we believe, than the arguments for their non-inspiration ; and they remain in the canon, and continue to nourish the faith and piety of the Church, as they have done for ages.

The truth is, the received text of Scripture, as far as its authenticity is concerned, and as compared with contemporaneous classical writings, is singularly free from errors, doubtful passages, and lacunæ. It has been wonderfully preserved. Twenty thousand various readings have been noticed in the brief six comedies of Terence alone. Let us, then, continue freely to use these precious portions of the word of God, though there may be peculiar difficulties that remain to be cleared up respecting their human authorship ; or, perhaps we should say, instead of " peculiar," more difficulties than attend the other books of the Bible.

There are, of course, a few individual passages about which there is so much doubt, and one or two that are so evidently spurious, that it would not be right to preach upon them, certainly not without giving their true character.

(c.) It should not disregard the analogy of faith. We mean by this the right dividing of the word of God, in relation both to the essential and the relative importance of every portion of Scripture. Thus one should not preach Judaism instead of Christianity, or dwell upon the Old Testament with such continuous intensity as to draw his inspiration from the spirit of the Old, rather than of the New, whose ministers we are. When we preach from the Old Testament, we should surely seek to find the New Testament in it—the testimony of Christ, the analogy of faith. Some one quaintly says that " He who understands the art of distinguishing between Moses and Christ may indeed be called a doc-

tor." The Old Testament is the New Testament in its germ, and therefore cannot be neglected by the preachers of Christ ; but we should choose our texts, and treat them in such a way as that they may all bear upon the "truth as it is in Jesus ;" and we think, indeed, that a minister of the New Testament should preach most of the time from the New Testament, as being the fuller revelation, the perfect truth ; since the Old Testament is more especially the law, and therefore preparative, but the New is more truly the Gospel of the grace of God, of his perfect manifestation in his Son ; and even in the New Testament itself there are some portions more particularly to be chosen and dwelt upon, as containing more of the truth and the riches of Christ.

(*d.*) It should not be an incorrect translation. The text should be taken in its real, not its paraphrased and often perverted sense.

The correct rendering of a text as well as the correct reading of a text should certainly always be given, even though our English translation of the passage be not entirely literal ; for a preacher should establish his people *on the rock of the original text*, and educate them to this idea.

This counsel in regard to establishing a people on the original Greek or Hebrew text puts an end to the war of versions, old and new. The preacher should employ all lights, aids, commentaries, translations, versions (and certainly the new revised version of 1881 is of signal assistance here), but above all his own most earnest investigation and thought, in order to arrive at the correct meaning of the text.

The exact rendering of a passage gives it often unexpected beauty and force ; even the right punctuation of a text adds vastly to its homiletical value.



How immeasurably different is the Roman Catholic reading, "I say unto thee this day, Thou shalt be with me in Paradise," from the true rendering, "I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." In 2 Pet. 3 : 12, *σπεύδοντας* might very well be rendered in the active and more stimulating sense of "hastening the day of God." In Gal. 3 : 24, *παιδαγωγός* refers to the slave or tutor who leads the child to the house of the schoolmaster ; so the law leads us to our teacher, Christ, that we may be taught and justified by faith. 1 Cor. 4 : 4, *Οὐδὲν ἑμαυτῷ σύνοιδα*, instead of meaning, "I know nothing by myself," is really, "I am not conscious to myself of any guilt," and yet I am not thereby justified ; showing that even the unconsciousness of his sins cannot justify the sinner—an important homiletical and practical sense. It might indeed be said of this passage that the "by" may have had the old meaning of "against," and yet, as the translation stands, it leads to a wrong sense. In a passage which we have before referred to—viz., John 7 : 17—the words of our Lord, "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine," might be more happily rendered, "If any man is willing to do his will," or "desires to do his will," thus emphasizing the desire, and bringing out more clearly the profound truth that our real knowledge of divine things depends upon the obedient and right disposition of the heart. It is, in fact, almost parallel with the beautiful passage, "He that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." Numerous other passages might be mentioned which are familiar ; yet how pertinaciously some absolutely faulty translations have been preached upon ! not, perhaps, to the inculcation of error, but certainly without a nice regard to exact truth. The text in Acts 26 : 28, "Almost thou persuad-

est me to be a Christian," has been used to serve as the basis of discourse on "being almost a Christian;" whereas it would seem to have been a scornful jest of Agrippa's, to the effect that Paul should be foolish enough to expect that in so short a time, so lightly, or by so little effort, Agrippa could be made a Christian.

The beautiful passage in 1 Cor. 13 : 12, "For now we see through a glass darkly," would be stronger still if rendered literally, "For now we see in a mirror obscurely (enigmatically)." The idea is not that of looking through a glass; but it is the imperfect reflection of an object in a steel mirror of the apostle's time, compared with the actual sight of the object itself. This is likened to the reflection of divine truth in these lower works of God, as compared with the future clear beholding of that truth in God himself. The translation of "my temptation," in Gal. 4 : 14, exposes the passage to the false and pernicious idea sometimes brought out in preaching upon it, that the apostle was in the power or continual temptation of some sinful habit—a totally incorrect meaning, for the "temptation" here is, in all probability, the trial occasioned by a physical disease or weakness.

Biblical hermeneutics is the preacher's life-long study. He should have the principles of interpretation clearly established in his mind, so that they may be constantly applied in practice; for his material for preaching lies in the Bible. The word of God is his field. Mere fragmentary studies of the Scriptures, therefore, for the purpose of selecting and elucidating individual texts for the material of preaching, are not enough; his noble and difficult office is to be an interpreter of the whole word of God to men. He should explore it thoroughly, its heights and depths, leaving no unknown land. He should make a systematic study of the Bible

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following its books connectedly, according to the law of harmonious development, and not being content with the investigation of isolated texts upon particular themes. Thus Whately says, "Beware of classing texts together in regard to their subjects alone, without any regard to the periods in which successive steps were made in the Christian revelation—jumbling confusedly Evangelists, Acts, Epistles. This, among other things, makes Socinians, who are right up to a certain point, but stop short in the middle of the gradual revelation; they have the blossom without the fruit. Jesus Christ was first made known as a man sent from God, whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; then as the promised Christ; then as He in whom 'dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,' in whom 'God was manifest in the flesh,' in whom 'God was manifesting himself unto the world.'"<sup>1</sup>

If the preacher studies the Bible as a whole, then, when he comes to the interpretation of a single text, or passage of Scripture, he sees its proper relations, limitations, scope, and bearing; and the philological exegesis of an individual text, though the first is therefore sometimes the least part of the matter. Its real, spiritual interpretation as an harmonious portion of God's word is of higher import; for the Spirit, who inspires the whole, who gives unity to the whole, must breathe new life into the word, and bring back its original power, its divine meaning. It was said of Edward Irving, who, with all his errors, had some grand traits as a preacher, that "the Bible was to him, not the foundation from which his theology was to be substantiated or proved, but a divine word, instinct with meaning and life, never to

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<sup>1</sup> E. Jane Whately's "Life of Archbishop Whately" v. i. p. 207.

be exhausted, and from which light and guidance—not vague, but particular—could be brought for every need.”<sup>1</sup> These remarks lead us to add, as coming under this general head, another principle in the choice of a text :

(*e.*) It should be suggested by the regular study of the Scriptures, rather than by chance or accident. This we have before remarked upon. The text should thus rather choose than be chosen ; it should spring out of the habitual meditation of the word of God. There should be a certain divine order in the selection of texts, and the mind should, in some true sense, be guided by the Holy Spirit in the selection of proper texts. The text should be the text to *be* preached upon, because the Spirit has brought the mind of the preacher to it—has led his thoughts, studies, and desires up to the open door of the house of God, where food may be received for the nourishment of the souls of pastor and people.

(*f.*) It should not be a merely human utterance, used as if it were the word of God. “ All that lies between the covers of the Bible is not divine.” It is not all a word or a speech of God himself, since a large portion of the Bible is the record of human sayings and doings. The record may indeed be divinely guided and preserved, while the text itself is but the expression of human imperfection and sin. The particular passage may be used as a text in its true connections, as an important fact of human history, as something essentially related to God’s government and the redemption of men, but not as a direct expression of the mind of God. There are texts spoken by angels, men, and

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Oliphant’s “ Life of Edward Irving.”



devils, by ignorant men, by wicked men and opposers, by the prince of evil himself. These may be usefully employed to illustrate the workings of the wicked heart, and also as forcible indirect arguments ; thus if even demoniacs, for example, acknowledge the truth and divine nature of Jesus, how much more should we !

We surely should never employ a text expressing a wrong sentiment, as if it were authoritative, simply because it stands in the Bible. The book of Ecclesiastes is, on this account, peculiarly difficult to be handled ; and a right or wrong theory of this book makes all imaginable difference in the authority of many of its passages—whether they are considered to be truly inspired by the Spirit of God, or are the utterances of the disappointed and corrupt human heart of Solomon, or of some writer of the splendid but morally fallen Solomonic epoch. Many a false doctrinal argument, or perverse opinion, has been bolstered up by texts which, if studied in all their bearings, would lead to precisely opposite conclusions. There are, it is true, texts which are the spontaneous words of men, and which are, nevertheless, inspired by the Holy Spirit ; they flow from the teachings of God's law and Spirit. Such is the passage in Gen. 32 : 10, where Jacob says, " I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant." Most of the words of Job and of Daniel (though not all) are of the same character ; they are " the reflection of the word and will of God in the spirit of man." These, of course, constitute legitimate texts, as do also those words where the Spirit of God forces the truth, as it were, from irreligious or wicked men, as in the case of Balaam, and of Pilate, and of the Roman centurion at the sepulchre ; and the utter-

ances of Job's friends, although condemned by God in the gross, are, in the detail, good.

2. The text should be fitted for edification.

It should be capable both of being built upon and also of building up in the truth. To do this it should have in it the elements of substance and increase—a text which contains a truth capable of application to the growing needs of practical life, a text, in a word, fitted for advancement in the knowledge of God and righteousness.

**The text  
should  
be fitted for  
edification.**

In its adaptation to the wants of the audience, to the time, and to the occasion, it should be suited to the high purposes of sacred instruction.

(a.) It should be plain. If easily understood, and naturally suggestive of the subject, this helps the common mind to comprehend and remember it; and it also removes the temptation from the preacher to be pedantic; he is led by it to a solid and earnest style of discourse. But there are marked exceptions to this choice of plain texts. A more difficult text may sometimes be very advantageous. Its treatment assists in the interpretation of the Bible to the common mind; and it leads to an expository style of discourse. The very announcement of such a text in itself awakens attention; for men like to see a hard knot untied. It is a great mental refreshment and excitement to the pious mind to obtain a new idea from God's word; and all men love to have mysteries unfolded. But very dark and difficult passages, such, for example, as the Saviour's words in Mark 9 : 49, or Paul's meaning in Rom. 7 : 9-25; or Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison, 1 Pet. 3 : 19, 20; or the passage in 2 Pet. 1 : 20, 21; or the allegory of the "bond woman" and the "free woman"

in Gal. 4 : 21-31 ; such recondite portions of Holy Writ should not be too frequently taken, nor as a general rule ; otherwise a curious, rather than trustful spirit will be nourished in the congregation.

And as another caution, it is not best to take a difficult passage unless we are sure we can go some way toward clearing up its difficulties, instead of increasing them ; thus we should not take such a text when pressed for time, or when we wish to talk in a direct, practical manner. In a word, he who is in earnest to convert the souls of his people will be most apt to take for texts those plain, important passages which contain saving truth expressed in the most simple and solid form ; comprehending in clear propositions the great truths of the gospel—the incarnation, the atonement, faith, love, repentance, the Christian life, the judgment, and eternal life.

(*b.*) It should be dignified, as opposed to what is odd. In so vast and various a book as the Bible—a world in itself—there are passages treating simply and freely of human life, which are to be taken in their right historical connections, and with proper mental preparation ; but which, suddenly announced from so solemn a place as the pulpit, would have a startling effect, tending to produce irreverence. The dignity of the text may be violated, (1) By a text which expresses no moral or religious idea ; as if one should take the passage concerning the apostle Paul, “ Having shorn his head in Cenchrea ; ” or the words of the Saviour, “ Loose the colt, and bring him here.” (2) By a text which suggests ludicrous associations. These words have been actually preached upon, Cant. 5 : 3 ; “ I have put off my coat ; how shall I put it on ? ” “ Ephraim is a cake unturned.” (3) By a text not adapted to modern ideas of modesty. There may be

too great a fear on the part of the preacher of offending a sickly fastidiousness, which by and by may grow so extravagant that it cannot even bear the truth that our Lord was conceived and born of a woman ; or that could not repeat many of his own words drawn from common things. To the pure all things are pure ; but, notwithstanding this, it is still true that the ideas of different ages differ, and a due regard should be had to that fact. The soberness of the text should be observed, in order, if nothing else, to maintain respect and reverence for the word of God. (4) By a merely ingenious and wittily-applied text. An old divine of the time of James I. of England and VI. of Scotland, preached before that unstable monarch upon the words in James 1:6—"Waver not." This text was surely apt enough and bold enough to be admissible ; and so, perhaps, was the text which was used on the following occasion : William Pitt, when made Premier of England at the age of twenty-four, was very slim and youthful in appearance. He was publicly fêted at Cambridge University, his own university, and was exceedingly pressed upon by the crowds of applicants for office. In the religious services which followed, the preacher took for his text John 6:9, "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes ; but what are they among so many?"

But the following use of a passage in Gen. 48:13, 14 was much too ingenious. Jacob, in his blessing of Manasseh, laid his right hand upon him crossed over his left ; and the theme drawn from this was, "We derive our blessings under the cross." Sometimes, however, there is a piquancy and pertinency in the text which is simply felicitous, and yet not undignified ; thus Edward Irving's first sermon in London was upon the text,



“Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask you, therefore, for what intent you have sent for me.”

(c.) It should be fresh. That is to say, as a general rule, it is well not to take too familiar a text; for a fresh text creates interest in the writer's own mind, and in the minds of his hearers; it is turning over a fresh leaf in the Bible; it promotes a broader knowledge of the Scriptures; it is bringing out of the divine treasures “things new and old.” Some preachers seem to think that they must in no case depart from the use of immemorial texts upon immemorial subjects; whereas other texts, a little out of the common, would throw new light upon the subject.

New circumstances and needs may require new texts in which we should study peculiar fitness of application, thus giving point to our instructions. We should study variety.

This, however, should not deter one from employing those old and well-worn texts which have the merit of greater appropriateness, and which seem to be peculiarly consecrated to particular themes; such, for example, as some of the words of Christ, which have a peculiar weight and sanction as coming directly from his mouth. “Ye must be born again” is and will ever be the great standard text upon the subject of regeneration; and yet there are many other fruitful texts upon this fundamental theme. There are, indeed, a few standard texts which a minister should most certainly preach upon, and repeatedly preach upon; for, though so familiar, when treated with earnestness they never fail of having a powerful effect; and, like the green earth, or the sun, or the stars, that we see every day, because they are so great, so good, so deep, so divine, they are ever fresh.

Searching out *novel* texts is not what is meant by employing fresh texts ; for fresh texts are those which, as soon as uttered, suggest original reading and study of the Bible, as if the preacher had gone further and deeper into the mysteries of the word, and found new and rare words of divine truth.

Freshness in preaching consists not only in the text and subject, but in the way the preacher handles his text ; there should be freshness in his own thought or in his own appreciation of the eternal newness of the word.

The stereotyped use of texts in preaching—setting aside those few familiar texts that stand out like mountains that cannot be hid—may be explained by the fact, that great preachers who have gone before have made certain texts familiar and popular by preaching great sermons upon them, by dwelling upon these passages as their favorites, as their theological proof-texts ; and less original minds of their own denominations and theological opinions have concluded that there were no texts in the Bible other than these. How different was a mind like that of Leighton, that found food in every part of the word of God !

(*d.*) It should, as a general rule, be didactic. That is, it should have in it the quality of instruction ; it should be a text capable of analysis, of expansion, of thoughtful treatment, in opposition to a highly imaginative, poetical, or impassioned text.

Such an impassioned text might be sometimes effective ; but it demands a peculiar state of feeling in preacher and audience, and requires an equally fervid introduction and continuously impassioned treatment. It also excites undue expectation in the audience, and strings up a sermon to too high a pitch. A text, therefore, which contains truth in a suggestive form, is better

than one which gives full expression to the feeling of the truth suggested ; for there is something undeveloped in the first, something that requires an act of reflection to awaken feeling, and it does not start from too high a point, thus aiding in the gradual development of the sermon. It is better to have feeling flow naturally from the actual treatment of a text, than to require it to flow at once on the mere pronouncing of the text. The preacher should not, therefore, acquire the habit of depending upon sensational, or what may be called ambitious texts. Yet, in a time when spiritual indifference broods like a death-pall over his congregation, it might be impressive for a minister to pour out his feelings in a vehement, ejaculatory text, which was uttered originally at a similar time of religious apathy and death : " Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God !"

Sometimes, also, a brilliant text gives power and glory to a sermon, when it is carried out, as are some of Melville's sermons, in the same striking and exalted strain. Such a text at once raises the audience into a higher sphere, and bears their thoughts beyond this world ; but it requires deep feeling, powerful imagination, and bold thought inspired by bold faith, to treat such texts successfully.

3. It should have true relations to the sermon. The text should be vitally one and the same with the discourse that follows, and should have its legitimate influence upon the sermon.

**The text  
should have  
true relations  
to the  
sermon.**

(a.) It should have pertinency. This means that there should be an organic and not merely mechanical connection between the text and the sermon. Pertinence implies,

(1.) An appropriateness in the choice of the text to the

outward object of the sermon. Texts should be chosen in reference to real and present wants, to events, circumstances, and exigencies springing up in the circle of a preacher's own pastoral work, and for which he should seek divine guidance in order to instruct, aid, and comfort others. That particular man or that particular community in affliction needs a special word of God which is addressed to actually existing needs and is fitted to reach and console them. Then there are texts which specially and exactly apply to the Lord's Supper, to Baptism, to Ordination, to Death, to the Seasons, to religious Revival, to War and Peace, to Thanksgiving and Fasting. These should be carefully sought out and employed. There is beauty in appropriateness, even if it be not the highest quality of art.

(2.) The quality of pertinency implies an appropriateness in the choice of the text to the inner subject of the sermon. This refers to its real meaning.

There should be no painful divorce of the text from the subject. The rule of pertinency in this regard may be violated, first, when the text does not contain the true subject of the sermon. Thus the text in fact may refer to an entirely different truth or class of truths from that treated of in the sermon ; as if, for a broad case, one should take 1 Cor. 11 : 34 to preach upon " Home and home piety ;" or if one were preaching upon the ordination of a minister he should select Acts 20 : 36-38, referring to a pastor's leave-taking of his people ; or, to narrow it down still closer, if the preacher should take a text which, though it may refer to the general subject treated of, yet does not set forth the particular subject treated of ; as if one should take a text which treats definitely of the example of some Christian grace, and should use it as a theme for discussing the foundations of that virtue.



It is the habit of some preachers to touch the text so lightly, to avoid it so scrupulously, to display one's independence in talking of everything but the text, and to look upon this fastidious avoidance of the text as a matter of good taste (as, indeed, it is in essay-writing, where one strives to convey an idea indirectly, to insinuate as it were, and where philosophy, instead of the gospel, is often preached), that Cowper's words are brought to mind :

“ How oft, when Paul has served us with a text,  
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preached !”

Yet, as a modification to what has been said in regard to the pertinency of the text in its relation to the subject, some modification must be made, owing to the great richness of the divine word ; for it belongs to the breadth and depth of inspiration that we can often use a text in various applications.

Thus texts which originally have a general application may be made to fit specific cases ; and texts which, on the other hand, have originally a definite historical or local reference, may be used for more general instruction.

Take such a text as the words of Christ contained in Matt. 22 : 21, “ Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's ; unto God the things that are God's ;” how multiform are the applications of such a passage, to baptism, to funeral occasions, to thanksgiving and political sermons, to charitable sermons, to young converts, and to many other subjects !

This rule may be violated, secondly, when the text has not the spirit of the sermon. Thus the sermon may be imaginative and poetical when the text is didactic ; or it may be logical and argumentative when the text is emo-

tional and pathetic ; whereas the text should give the key-note to the sermon.

(*b.*) It should have directness. By this is meant that the text should be one that can be directly and honestly used for the purposes of the sermon and not be ingeniously wrested to apply to something else which the preacher desires to discuss, or to present to his audience. A direct treatment and application of texts evidently secure more of divine authority, and tend more certainly to edification.

The question arises here, May we employ an accommodated text? An accommodated text, being chosen, not on the principle of absolute identity, but only of similarity, though allowable and sometimes even necessary, should be sparingly used, and never from mere fanciful resemblance, but from a substantial similarity of ideas or truths. “Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward,” may be justly applied to Christian sanctification amid difficulties, or to Christian activity in discouraging circumstances.

**An accommodated text.** 1 Chron. 21 : 24, “And King David said to Ornan, Nay ; but I will verily buy it for the full price ; for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.” Here the great principle of self-sacrifice, of doing something for the Lord which really costs effort, self-denial, the giving up of property, or what is cherished, for his sake, is taught ; and it may have a genuine application in many other ways, and at the present day.

Such an accommodated text, when it suggests a natural and sensible resemblance of ideas, without anything strained or frivolous, and is itself at the same time founded upon some deep principle of truth, applied

only to different circumstances, is perfectly justifiable. "Christ stilling the storm" is well applied to his peace-giving power in spiritual things, in stilling the tempest of the wicked and passionate heart ; for outer things may typify inward feelings.

"Simon bearing the cross" is a proper type of the Christian bearing the cross after Christ ; in fact, the principle of humble obedience is the same in both actions.

The use of this principle of symbolical interpretation by the mediæval preachers has already been noticed. They were sometimes quite felicitous in the employment of the accommodated text, although they were more often given to extravagant allegorizing. Thus Neale says, "Consider the admirable wisdom with which the following texts are selected, under the head that we ought to be solicitous to help forward each other's salvation : Genesis 4 : 9, 'Where is Abel thy brother ?' ; Ex. 26 : 3, 'The fine curtains shall be coupled together, one to another ;' Is. 2 : 3, 'Come ye and let us go up to the house of the Lord ;' Jer. 16 : 16, 'Behold I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them ;' John 1 : 45, 'Philip findeth Nathaniel ;' John 4 : 28, 'The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city ;' Rev. 22 : 17, 'And let him that heareth say, Come.' " <sup>1</sup>

There is a curious passage in Daille's "*Traites de l'Eglise de l'Empire des saints pères*" (liv. ii., chap. 3), on the abuse of allegorical interpretation, which is worthy of study by those who are tempted to fall into this vein. The Welsh preachers have resuscitated this style of

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<sup>1</sup> Neale's "*Mediæval Preachers*," p. 38.

preaching ; but it were better left with the preachers of the Middle Ages, and not be largely revived ; for this strained use of texts may easily be carried too far ; thus Hagenbach mentions that a German preacher drew from the Saviour's words on the cross, " I thirst," the theme that " Christ thirsted for the salvation of men."

It is one thing to take an outward type as obviously suggesting an inward truth, and another thing deliberately to turn the text to a sense entirely different from what it will plainly bear.

The allegorical use of texts in the past, especially by the older Puritan divines, among them peerless John Bunyan himself, is an illustration of this. To what absurdities has it not sometimes led ? The four streams of Paradise have been metamorphosed into the four evangelists ; and the two pennies given by the Good Samaritan have been turned into the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. A preacher who deals in such a fanciful torturing of the plain meaning of texts, not only shows weakness, but is apt to lead himself and others into error, mysticism, and obscurity, as did Origen, with all his profound intellect and piety.

This typical method of preaching has not entirely died out in these modern times or in sober, unimagi-native, straightforward New England. How often do we hear preachers of a poetical turn of mind (poetry is good in a sermon in its right place) make use of this method. Such preachers would really prefer to take the narrative of Christ in the storm and turn it all into a spiritual sense, thereby giving scope for picture-drawing, and for the display of the fancy, than to take a text plainly teaching the same truths of spiritual peril through sin, and redemption through Christ. But false doctrine is sometimes taught in this way, and all the doctrine in



such a sermon exists solely in the preacher's imagination, and not a word of it is contained in the narrative. Everything in the way of fact or plain history in the Bible may be typified by a preacher who cultivates a poetical style of sermonizing ; and this habit of mind should be strenuously guarded against. In a modern Protestant sermon noticed by Coquerel (perhaps its counterpart may have been heard by every one of us) the narrative of the healing of blind Bartimeus has thus been employed. Two kinds of blindness are designated in this history, that of the body and that of the soul. Christ has cured one, he can cure the other ; Bartimeus hears a great noise of the multitude, which signifies the advancing triumph of the Christian faith in the world ; his cry to Christ to heal him is the first cry of the sinner convicted of sin ; the multitude repressing this cry means the opposition of the world to spiritual things ; the answer of Christ, " What wouldst thou that I should do unto thee," is the voice of divine grace ; the recovery of sight is regeneration. This, though strained, is not so far out of the way as are many such ingenious discourses. But such sermons are not preaching, they are rather the parody of the gospel. There is only the shadow of the truth in them. Let us, then, resist this seductive temptation as much as possible, and not be carried away by the opportunity which hundreds of like passages in sacred writ affords us of this kind of artificial and spiritualizing discourse.

Yet the use of the legitimate principle of accommodation in texts cannot be given up ; for if we give it up we should lose much that is interesting to the mind in the inward and outward resemblances of truth, and in the matter of actual inspiration. Language, for example, which is addressed to the apostles, may, in most in-

stances, be rightly accommodated to apply to all Christians. But in using accommodated texts, let this be ever remembered, that the original significance of the text should not be lost sight of ; it should be fairly applied, and it should always be clearly stated in some way that it is an accommodated use of the text.

But while freely yielding this principle, we are decidedly opposed to the employment of what are called "motto texts."

**Motto texts.** Motto texts are those that are not made the real foundation of the sermon. They are used merely as a matter of form, in order that there may be a text to stand at the head of the sermon ; for they exert no further shaping influence on the subject, or on the mode of treating it. This is using the word of God unworthily, and the "text" becomes a "pretext." Thus, to take a passage like Rom. 6:5-11, so full of rich and particular instructions upon the central doctrine of the gospel, and, merely because it refers to the subject of the atonement, or has perhaps that word in it, to preach a sermon in the usual abstract way, drawn from theological class-notes, or systematic treatises on the doctrine of the atonement, without further reference to the text itself, would be an unwarranted abuse of the Scriptures.

(c.) It should have correctness. That is, the text should be employed in the sermon according to the truth, according to the true intention of the author, be he God or man ; and it should be applied to a subject which is the true one taught by it, and not to any other subject. This may seem to repeat what was said before, but we do not refer now altogether to the correctness of the verbal interpretation of the text, to which reference has been already made ; but more to the substance of the text itself, since truth is better than falsehood, and even

truth cannot be helped by untrue arguments ; and if certain texts have been used from time immemorial as proof-texts of any particular subject, which are not so in fact, it is, on a broader view of truth, right to disuse them for such a purpose, and to give them their true meaning ; for it is not the number of proof-texts that establishes a truth, but the clearness and authority of one text ; and if many texts may be used by way of illustration, they should not be employed as proof, and much less as containing the true substance of a particular doctrine or subject. This opens an interesting field of discussion in regard to the external and internal sense of Scripture and the just limitations of biblical truth ; which questions, however, we cannot here discuss.

The simple principle now before us is, that the text should be correctly employed in its relation to the subject ; that the real contents of the subject should be found in it, though it may be in the simplest synthetical form ; it should not be wrested from its true meaning, force, and relations.

Preachers will hereafter be called to a stricter account in their use of texts ; they will be required to be more candid and true, and their preaching will gain proportionally in point and power.

(*d.*) It should have fruitfulness. Texts should be taken which are fitted to produce rich and fruitful sermons.

The Bible is full of germinal texts capable of almost infinite development ; and yet every word and even sentence in the Bible which seems to convey such fruitful ideas, does not always do so.

Preachers are sometimes apt to be caught by the appearance of a passage rather than by the substance of truth which it contains ; for a text often appears very sugges-

tive ; it seems to open a most fruitful subject of thought ; whereas it may be but an incidental or accidental expression, and by no means the best and fullest manifestation of the truth. Vinet (*Homiletics*, p. 137) thus describes a fruitful text : “ I call a text fruitful which, without foreign additions, without the aid of minute details, without discussion, furnishes, when reduced to its just meaning, matter for a development interesting in all its parts, and which leaves with us an important result.”

The subject of the text lies so directly at the foundation of Christian preaching, and so comprehends within itself the whole matter both of the sources of power and the inherent difficulties of sermonizing, that we cannot forbear, in closing this subject, even at the risk of some repetition, to give a few brief practical suggestions upon the matter of the proper handling and interpretation of texts.

**Practical suggestions on the handling and interpretation of texts.**

1. Interpretation as the primary sphere of the preacher. This truth has been, perhaps, already sufficiently dwelt upon. Interpretation forms the primitive sphere of the preacher's appointed work ; he is, for the purposes of instruction, not to invent new truth, but to explain and to make clear truth already revealed ; he is not to preach primarily from a philosophy of divine truth, or even from the “ analogy of faith,” or from previously conceived theological systems and theories, whether his own or others (and which are very good in their place), but from the basis of a sound interpretation of the word of God, and of that particular portion or text of Scripture with which he is dealing.

2. Classification of texts for the purpose of preaching.



There is no book so multiform in its aspects as the Bible, being made in different stages of religious development, and much of it being of peculiar and supernatural import, where inspiration struggles to express itself through an imperfect medium of human language. How large a part of the Bible is poetical, in which the deeper truth finds expression in type, figure, and symbol—in a word, in purely emotional language. How much of the Bible also is prophetic, wherein addition to the vagueness of poetic symbolism, the uncertain element of futurity comes in! Another portion of the Bible is pure narrative, or the historic record of actual events; and, after all, but a small part of the Scriptures, in form at least, is directly doctrinal and didactic. In handling the sacred text for the purposes of instruction, great discrimination and wisdom are required; the spirit of the ancient Antiochean exegesis, applying sober and common-sense interpretation, and taking things as they are obviously meant, instead of the wilder speculative method of the Alexandrian school.

Classification  
of texts.

As to the actual classification of texts, no scientific method can be laid down; every one is at liberty to make his own classification; but one can see at a glance that there are at least half a score of broad classes or types of texts, which it would be foolish to treat in a precisely similar way; as, for example:

(1.) Narrative and historical; (2.) Poetical, symbolic, and parabolic; (3.) Prophetic; (4.) Meditative, æsthetic, and subjective; (5.) Doctrinal; (6.) Ethical and practical; (7.) Spiritual, or purely spiritual. The particular treatment of these different classes we will not here dwell upon, although in various ways, and especially under the head of the "development" of a sermon, more of a specific nature will be said.

3. Consulting the text in the original. That one should, in every instance, consult the original Hebrew or Greek in selecting a text to preach upon, is an obligation which both common sense and honest conscience dictate. But how often is this duty lost sight of by even the best men. The pressure of official work, the over-confidence in our own English version, the familiarity which breeds, if not contempt yet carelessness, combine to make preachers neglectful in this respect. But there are three very simple and very familiar suggestions, which might be termed axioms, which it were well for the preacher to fix in his mind.

Consulting  
the original  
text.

(1.) The precise translation of the original passage should first of all be obtained. There should be no indefiniteness here. Not what I would make the passage to mean, nor what Augustine, or Calvin, or Meyer, or Alford, or any other man, however influential as a teacher and commentator, would make it to mean ; but what the words themselves truly and obviously teach, this should be the rule.

(2.) The meaning of Scripture is to be obtained in the same way that we get at the meaning of any other book written in a foreign tongue. We are to use our best intelligence, judgment, and scholarship for this end. Proper reverence for the word of God does not forbid this. The Bible does not take itself out of the category of books that are addressed to the understanding. It was meant for men, was meant for their comprehension, instruction, and highest welfare. Although the supernatural truth revealed in the Bible brings in a new element which requires the opening of the spiritual sense to comprehend it spiritually, yet as far as the meaning of the words themselves is concerned, the same appliances

and methods—the use of grammars, dictionaries, and commentaries which would be required in translating a classical Greek or Latin author, and the same philosophy of language, and the application of the same critical skill and judgment—these are equally needed in the study of the Scriptures. They are both lawful and essential. There is no illusion about this. One must understand Hebrew and Greek to interpret the Bible, or he must take a second-hand interpretation.

(3.) There is but one true meaning to a passage, and not many meanings. The meaning may be profound and obscure, but is one. The Bible is not double-voiced. It has an honest meaning, a single voice, a clear teaching. We have only to discover this. Two widely-different meanings cannot both be right. We may be in doubt which of them is true, but one only is true.

4. Scholarly familiarity with the peculiar usages and idioms of scriptural language. The preacher needs a special preparation beyond that of the classical scholar for the study and interpretation of the Scriptures. While he should be intelligent in regard to those historical, geographical, chronological, and archæological studies which fit him to understand so ancient a book, he should especially have that philological knowledge which would enable him to have some genuine confidence in his own comprehension of the text. He should be able to enter into the very spirit of the original; to comprehend the force of characteristic biblical forms of expression; to feel the significance of the use of certain words instead of others, and even of particles, accents, and emphases. The language of Scripture, archaic and Oriental, cannot be judged by the principles that govern classic Greek or

**Scholarly  
familiarity  
with the  
idioms of  
Scripture.**

Latin, or our modern English tongue ; therefore one is compelled to make a comprehensive study of the Bible in order to enter into these—we will not call them niceties, for they are vital expressions of truth—but rather nice and delicate forms of varied expression, belonging to the original languages of the Bible, upon which often great truths hang. Thus, for example, the language of Scripture delights in strong contrasts—strong lights and shades—by which the truth expressed is exaggerated, as well as its opposite, in order to produce a vivid impression. Scriptural exaggeration is not erroneous statement, but statement addressed to the imagination or the feelings rather than to the calm didactic reason.

When the apostle James says that the man who sins not in word, the same is a perfect man ; when our Lord says that he who hateth not his father and mother cannot be his disciple, he who is penetrated with the spirit of scriptural language knows how to take the sense of such passages. He neither gives too much nor too little stress to them. The literal intellect cannot be applied to such texts, but there must be the higher critical and sympathetic appreciation.

The Scriptures also often boldly set forth a specific case in such a way as to convey to the less thoughtful or the fanatically disposed mind, the impression that an invariable principle or rule is created in regard to every such specific case ; whereas it has a wider and more general import. When, for instance, the young man was told that he must sell all that he had and give to the poor before he could follow Christ, and the narrative is left in this abrupt manner, if it were argued from this that the holding of property in any shape by every person who was, or desired to become a Christian, was sinful, this would be erroneous ; but there was, nevertheless, a



great principle of Christian self-denial taught here. To see just where a principle applies, in what it is general and what specific, in what it is absolute and in what relative, requires intelligent and cultivated discrimination, especially in the interpreter and teacher of truth. A preacher is thus called upon in the study of texts constantly to use his finest powers of understanding, disciplined by a comprehensive philological skill. He could hardly make himself perfect. He could not, for instance, do better than to spend a definite period in studying the language of the apostle Paul, his style, his mode of argumentation, and his psychology. The interpreter should be able to note and understand the marked Hebraisms and Hellenisms of New Testament Greek. "In especial it is to be noticed that the Hebrew of the Old Testament forms the basis of the language and idioms of the Revealed Word; so that one cannot fully understand the language of the New Testament without understanding that of the Old. Thus one of the first duties of the preacher is to ascertain the meaning of the words of the text in their common usage at the time, while noting their idiomatic and familiar applications."

This leads me to say a few words more particularly upon the interpretation of the Old Testament.

5. The interpretation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament should be interpreted in accordance with the law of historic and essential truth. We mean by this the recognizing of a principle of historic development in the Scriptures—that the germ and not the full fruitage of divine truth is to be found in the Old Testament. Thus Dr. Arnold notices the error continually made by Christian preachers in regarding the holiness of the Old Testament

**Interpretation  
of the Old  
Testament.**

patriarchs as absolute instead of relative ; that men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had personal communication with God, had such a knowledge of holy and divine things as the apostles John and Paul had, and giving to them all the excellences of perfectly holy characters ; and as if they had a nearer communion with God than even Christians had ; whereas they were in some things very imperfect. This arose out of the fact, he said, that Christians forget the privileges in their communion with the Holy Spirit. Knowledge and holiness are infinitely clearer under the reign of the Spirit than in the time of the patriarchs, when it was, as it were, a relative or reflected light ; but now it is one direct from God and Christ through the Spirit. In the Old Testament men are not addressed as having faith in Christ, or as looking to eternal life with any large and settled hope such as Christian believers possess. Knowing the New, we find a great deal in the Old Testament to nourish our faith and Christian character ; but the light after all was not perfect, and a man who now lives entirely in the Old Testament is in fact a Jew, or a Judaic Christian.

We hear the principle sometimes laid down in respect of sermonizing that it is right to take an Old Testament text and put into it all the meaning of the New Testament. This is a wrong principle. It is making the Scriptures a sort of divination book, and it is destructive of intelligent interpretation. The Bible should be looked upon as containing the greatest and most sacred truths, and as setting forth especially God's manifestation of himself and his dealing with men ; but in its interpretation, the best human qualities of reason, sagacity, tact, learning, and common sense should be called upon.

This is seen in the power of discriminating between the divine and the human elements of Scripture, the

infallibility of the divine and the fallibility of the human.

This recognizes in the writings of Scripture the use of the human instrument, the reproducing of the *milieu* or immediate surroundings of the text, such as the age, the habit of thought, the character and philosophy of the language.

Let us not start, as Arnold did not, with a preconceived theory of inspiration ; but let us reverently and humbly study the record as sent from God, and apply to it our best reason. Undoubtedly the nature of God's principles in his own word can be best vindicated by his own acts ; or those portions of the Old Testament, for example, which seem very obscure and difficult, such as the slaughter of the Canaanites, the sacrifice of Isaac, the language of the imprecatory psalms—these are best explained by him who can best unravel the thread of God's religious education of the race from its earliest infancy.

In interpreting the Old Testament, one should have regard also to the principles of a true redaction or reduction to order of the different parts and books of the Old Testament. The very beginnings of Genesis introduce us to two distinct accounts of the creation. The books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, are sometimes parallel rather than continuous history. The twenty-fourth and the twenty-sixth chapters of the first book of Samuel contain different accounts of the same event. How many more such illustrations might be given !

6. Consulting the context. In the context we may find circumstances, definitions, limitations, parallelisms, illustrations and various ideas, **Consulting the context.** examples and facts, which throw great light upon the true meaning of the text. To give the con-

text due consideration is a well-settled rule of homiletics; and yet how often is it violated in the stereotyped method of treating texts. The old motto of the mystics and the allegorists, "*Verba Scriptura tantum ubique significare, quantum significare possunt*," or the idea still asserted by some that we may take a detached text and make it to mean all that the words in themselves can possibly be pressed to mean, without regard to its probable and true meaning, is a dangerous rule of interpretation. The text may, for example, be originally used to apply to temporal things, and we should be careful in applying it to spiritual things. It may be employed, originally, simply as a figure of speech, and not literally. Now a figure means one thing in one place, and another thing in another. A phrase in the mouth of one person may teach a very different lesson from what it does in the mouth of another. The Bible is not a "lively oracle" in the sense of enunciating a truth without regard to order, time, or circumstance; but it is addressed to the reason, and is amenable to historic conditions. A good Reference Bible is of assistance in enlarging the scriptural basis of a sermon, and in comparing the truth of the text with parallel passages teaching the same truth in different aspects. The context may be looked upon in its historical or logical connections, either in regard to its relations of thought, or its relations of time, place, and circumstance. The order of thought, for instance, in a Pauline epistle, though it may be often recondite, because connected with a controversial drift, is still of the greatest importance to comprehend, in arriving at the general tenor and significance of its instruction. We must, in fact, study the whole scope of the passage in all its relations in order to be honest, and in order to draw from the text its true teaching capacities.



7. Employing a text containing a perfect idea, and that the complete idea of the author.

This should be done as far as possible, especially when we preach topical sermons. Claude's rule is, "The text must contain the complete idea of the writer from whom it is borrowed ; for it is his language, they are his sentiments, which we are to explain to our hearers." Text  
containing a  
perfect theme.

In a word, we are not to mangle the Bible. We are to get at the full and rounded meaning of the Sacred Word, and to discuss the true subjects and truths which it enunciates. We should not be hasty to draw our subjects from texts. Vinet says : " We must not confound texts with phrases and periods, nor logical unity with grammatical unity, neither must we think that the text ends where the grammatical sense ends, or even where logical unity closes. Many logical unities may together form a greater unity ; and it is impossible to see beforehand, and in an absolute manner, what are the limits of a true text. The same text may furnish ten ; ten texts may make one. The art of cutting up a text, the art of grouping many texts into one, deserves examination." <sup>1</sup>

In order to retain this completeness of idea in the text it is not well, as a general rule, to employ two texts, or to employ two or more texts from different parts of the Bible ; it is better to have but one text, one passage of Scripture, and that, whether long or short, should contain one subject, and be complete in itself.

The advice is commonly given that the text should be short, for a short text is better remembered. Brief, condensed, penetrating texts stick in the memory like nails fastened by the masters of assemblies. And yet texts

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<sup>1</sup> Vinet's " Homiletics," p. 141.

may be too brief ; they may not contain a whole subject ; they may be mere fragments of a truth or of a sentence. The better rule is, that the text should contain one complete truth or idea, and then it may be long or brief. What a world of meaning is in that shortest text of the Bible, " Jesus wept ! "

It is wholly unjustifiable to take a mere portion or clause of a verse, even if it contains good sense in itself, but which, by thus dismembering it from the rest, does not give the real or full sense intended to be conveyed by the whole verse ; such a text, for instance, as Heb. 4 : 2, " But the word preached did not profit them ; " without adding the very important clause, " not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. " The longer the passage, however, that we may conveniently employ for a text, which at the same time contains a perfect theme, and does not violate the law of unity, the more of the actual body of Scripture we bring before the people, and the nearer do we come, undoubtedly, to the primitive style of preaching.

The following texts might be cited as having unity of theme, or as containing one main thought without excess or deficiency, though composed, it may be, of elaborate parts : 1 Pet. 1 : 24, 25, the imperishable character of the Word of God as contrasted with the changing character of visible things ; John 3 : 16, the sending of Christ a convincing and triumphant proof of the love of God ; 1 John 4 : 19, the grand apology of Christians for loving God ; Galatians 3 : 15-22, the sureness of the promises in Christ. Even in so elaborate a passage as that last cited there is really but one idea running through it ; as also in James 1 : 22-27, the hearing and the doing of the word in their relations.

8. Parabolic texts. In employing these we should

strive to come at the germinant idea of the figure, or the idea with which the picture is compared, or to which it is parallel. We should get at the foundation truth of a figure or a parable ; and such texts are good and rich texts if rightly treated. Indeed, everything to the spiritual mind becomes an image of the spiritual, and yet, as we have before said, care should be taken not to "spiritualize" texts unduly.

**Figurative  
and parabolic  
texts.**

In regard to the homiletical treatment of the parables of Scripture there are two theories ; one is, that there is but one main spiritual meaning or lesson taught, and that the circumstantialia of the parable are wholly secondary, or only intended to make the story natural and coherent ; the other is, that all parts of the parable, that every circumstance, and every turn of the allegory and every word is important and full of didactic significance. While the first of these is, in our opinion, the nearest to the truth, and comes under the principle that a metaphor should not be made to run upon four feet, yet for the preacher's purposes the parables of our Saviour are so wonderfully full of meaning that he cannot afford to neglect any part, or circumstance, or feature of them ; each serving to color, modify, and enrich the whole lesson.

There is, at least, whatever theory of homiletical treatment we may adopt, one broad generalization which will comprehend the whole lesson and beauty of the parable. But for one to dwell too precisely upon the poetic and symbolical portions of the Bible, to go into the minutiae of the fringes on the priests' garments ; this leads to artificiality and barrenness.

We should avoid unfruitful figures or figures that do not contain real truths. We should shun strained parallelisms that the Scriptures themselves never intended.

But such passages as John 4 : 10 and 1 Cor. 12 : 25-27 are of the number of inspired figures where one cannot easily make a mistake in the thing signified ; but which, when rightly understood, convey living truths, reasons, proofs, vividly expressed. Often the parable forms a true subject in itself, without the need of drawing out a propositional form, or a more distinct theme, as Matt. 13 : 1-9. It is simply enough to comment upon this parable of the sower, especially as the Lord has been his own interpreter in it, textually, part by part. In treating such a parable, the sermon should not lose its simple explanatory form. Some parables are difficult to explain, to group the ideas boldly and successfully, to grasp the inner sense of the truth amid their contrariety and subtle changes. Such are the parables of the "unjust steward," and of the "laborers in the vineyard."

9. The use of historical texts. In treating such texts one may either lay the stress upon the main event contained in the narrative, or upon some side event, or side-issue, growing out of it. He may take the whole of a history, or only a part, a single salient circumstance, a single person, or a single act or remark of a single person ; but if he does this last he must do it regardful of the connections, and of the whole texture of the historic web out of which he draws this thread. We shall speak further of historic sermons, under the head of "development."

10. Time of choosing the text. The preacher, as a general rule, should select the text before he selects the subject. Sometimes this may not be feasible, as in occasional sermons, but it is the right habit for an interpreter or preacher of the Scriptures to form. This seems to honor the Word of God—that the subject should spring from it rather



than that it should be fitted to the subject. This rule is continually violated by those who preach altogether topically.

Dr. Emmons recommended the choosing of a subject before a text ; and there may be exceptional cases where this is good or justifiable, as, for instance, when a subject which has possessed the mind has sprung up without connection with any particular text ; yet, when an appropriate text is found for such a subject, it will often receive new light and richness from the discussion of the text itself. Paul said to Timothy (2 Tim. 4 : 2), " Preach the word."

11. Announcing the text. As a practical hint in the mere matter of delivery, the text should be announced first of all. It is the European custom to preface the text with some remarks, sometimes with a little sermon, on the general subject of praise, or on the necessity of God's blessing the word ; our own custom of announcing the text first, with some simple introductory phrase, is, however, we think, the best.

**Announcing  
the text.**

12. Pronouncing the text. As a second hint in the delivery, the text should be pronounced clearly, so that no one in the audience should fail to hear it. All things should be in readiness, so that there may be no haste, or bustling, business-like air at the commencement of the discourse. Even as the pulpit itself should be entered with manly dignity and seriousness, so the opening services should be simple, modest, serious, yet without dulness or gloomy gravity. There should be no act or gesture that draws the attention of the audience particularly to the speaker ; but the thought of God and the word of God should be the first impression. It is well to mention distinctly the chapter and verse before

**Pronouncing  
the text.**

mentioning the words of the text ; for the habit of consulting the Bible and following the preacher in the Bible upon the part of the congregation, is certainly to be encouraged. If the text is a brief one it is well to read it twice ; if a longer one, it may be repeated in some way in the introduction ; at all events, the audience should hear and understand distinctly what the text is, or the effect of the discourse is greatly impaired, perhaps lost. The text should be read in a slow and clear voice, but not loud, and perhaps a little more emphatically the second time than the first.

#### SEC. 14. *The Introduction.*

Napoleon is reported to have said that " the first five minutes of a battle are the decisive ones ;" and this remark might sometimes also be applied to a sermon ; for although the preacher, like a military general, by good fortune and skill may be able to recover lost ground, he may also, like a general, not be able to restore the lost chances of a blundering and unfortunate initiative movement, and may be forced to a humiliating defeat.

The introduction to a discourse is naturally compared to the door, or vestibule, of a house : it opens to what the house contains. The comparison might be carried still further ; for since the door of the house should accord with the style and character of the house itself, and one would not put a Grecian portico on a Gothic house, so the introduction should harmonize with the subject of the discourse, and not strike the mind with incongruity ; and as the door ought not to be too big for the house, neither should the introduction be so for the sermon. Neither should the doorway be mean and narrow, nor the introduction fail of an air of freedom and

simple elegance ; and as the door is generally placed in the centre of the building, in like manner the introduction strikes the central thought and purpose of the sermon.

In the matter of the introduction, it is well to study the best models, not only of the introductions of orations and sermons, but of all true literary works ; for every work addressed to the human mind must have an intelligent and fit beginning, which suggests its object and denotes its leading idea. The brief but impressive introductions of the books of the Bible show that their authors, writing under the impulse of inspiration, did not disdain this rational method of making their objects known, of interesting those whom they addressed. The short introductions of the "Iliad," the "Æneid," the "Paradise Lost," the "Divina Commedia," the "Faerie Queene," and the "Jerusalem Delivered," short as they are, may have cost their authors more labor than any other part of their poems, and may have been the last finished ; for they gathered up all the rays of light into one beam, they smote the human mind with a new thought and theme.

Study of  
models.

Although it is well for a preacher to study good models of introductions in the works of great writers, and especially in the orations and discourses of the best orators, it is better to take the best preachers for our models.

Dr. South's introductions are characteristic, and may be described by the word *commanding* ; for they immediately arrest attention, and strike the key-note of the sermon with a ringing blow, as much as to say, "Listen, ye people, to what I have to say on this subject, for I have that to say which is important." There is no frippery, or fancy, or fine writing, but a plain common sense, which appeals at once to the masculine understanding,

and leads the hearer to say, "At all events, here is a *man* who has begun to speak ; he is worth listening to, even if I cannot agree with him." South's introductions are not so long as to lead the mind away from the object set before him, or from the work laid out in the text itself—which he explains and develops with great care.

Dr. Emmons's introductions are also, in some respects, models of excellence, and possess the same characteristics of common sense, and the union of strong thought with simple expression. They are judicious introductions ; they seem perfectly pertinent to the subject, while at the same time they are sagacious, and they awaken curiosity. They are like a Doric porch—very plain and unornamented, but with a certain pleasing, attractive majesty.

Saurin's introductions are particularly happy, and sometimes they are exceedingly bold and striking. They make it difficult to carry on and out the first impressions produced, and which it would not be well for any less brilliant and vigorous preacher to imitate.

Of contemporaneous and younger preachers, the sermons of F. W. Robertson deserve to be studied for their artistic excellence. Some of his introductions consist of but six or seven lines ; others seem to lead on imperceptibly, without indicating where they leave off, into the heart of the sermon ; but in all of them, while there is no display, there is, at the outset, a fresh turn given to the subject, a new and awakening train of thought started. Robertson's introductions give the idea of a steel forceps seizing upon an object with tenacious grasp, and holding it up with perfect ease and power, turning it round, and then thrusting it into the glowing fire of thought, and welding it with the hammer of an earnest purpose : his introduction seems to say,



"I have thought this subject through ; I have gone to the heart of it ; I intend to treat it in my own way, and out of my own head ;" and then the preacher proceeds to lay the subject open, with the same free and confident power. There is no parading of theological or philological pedantry ; he is evidently not talking to scholars or philosophers, but he is talking to men—to thinking and feeling men. Perhaps the epithet which would best characterize his introductions is, manly ; just like the greeting of one genuine man to another, with no servility and no concealment, and yet with a certain thoughtfulness and art. The introduction to the sermon on " Caiaphas' View of a Vicarious Atonement " (First Series, p. 164) is a masterpiece of elaborate and subtile thought, as preparing the way for a remarkable and original view of the atonement ; but generally he begins with a simple, strong, and interesting train of thought, without a shadow of learned affectation, or even of mock rhetoric ; as, for instance, in the sermon on " Worldliness " (Second Series, p. 173), from the text 1 John 2 : 15-17. This introduction, while it is simple and easy to comprehend, yet contains an extremely interesting and profound question, to the solution of which the mind of the hearer is excited and pushed on. The somewhat extended introduction to the sermon on " Realizing the Second Advent " (First Series, p. 180) is a fine example of the plain, strong, unpedantic, and yet fresh and original way in which this preacher takes up a theme ; it is the highest art of a cultured and philosophic mind, determined to be simple, determined to be true and practical, and to be understood by all.

Robertson's introductions are, in fact, unconscious exhibitions of the man himself, of his earnest, penetrating, and, as it were, military mind, that surveys the field at a

glance, and at once seizes upon the most advantageous positions to bring his forces into action. He stands before us at the instant he begins to speak, an able and sincere teacher, who must be attended to ; he wins, in his very introduction, our respect for himself, if not our convictions of the truth of what he says ; and the hearer wishes to hear such a man through, which is an important point gained. That is, perhaps, the great end of the introduction, which should excite a strong and healthy feeling of expectation for what is to follow.

The introductions of J. H. Newman's sermons are generally very happy, easy, and at the same time calculated to interest and attract. They contain some fresh thought, but clothed in simple language, *e.g.*, in a sermon upon "hypocrisy," he begins thus : "Hypocrisy is a serious word. We are accustomed to consider the hypocrite as a hateful, despicable character, and an uncommon one. How is it, then, that our blessed Lord, when surrounded by an innumerable multitude, began, *first of all*, to warn his disciples against hypocrisy, as though they were in special danger of becoming like those base deceivers, the Pharisees ? Thus an instructive subject is open to our consideration, which we will now pursue." <sup>1</sup>

What is an introduction ? (Lat. *exordium*, Gr. *proem*.) To speak in general terms, it is something which conducts to the real subject, but which is not itself the real subject. It is not, strictly speaking, the beginning of the discourse, but it leads to the beginning. It does not even include all that is preliminary to the proposition in the way of actual explanation or clearing up of difficulties ; but it has regard rather to the state of mind of the audience and of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Parochial and Plain Sermons," Ser. 10th.

speaker, putting the speaker in correspondence with the audience.

We would, therefore, more fully define a true introduction to be, all that precedes the real discussion of the subject, and which is fitted to secure the favorable attention of the hearer to the speaker and to his theme.

**Definition of  
introduction.**

Quintilian says, "An exordium is designed to make the hearer think favorably of what the speaker is about to say." Schott's definition is, "All that part of a sermon which is intended to prepare the hearers for the body of the sermon, by bringing them into the same circle of ideas and sympathy of feeling of the speaker." Vinet says, "The exordium should be drawn from an idea in immediate contact with the subject, without forming a part of it. It should be an idea between which and that of the discourse there is no place for another idea, so that the first step we take out of that idea, transports us into our subject."<sup>1</sup>

As to the necessity of an introduction, although there may be cases where an introduction is not necessary—where the subject, for instance, is a very familiar one, or where the audience is entirely prepared to hear it discussed—yet the necessity of some introduction to an important discourse is founded in nature, and in the very laws of the mind.

**Necessity  
of an  
introduction.**

Nature has few sudden movements; the ocean shelves off gradually, and one season imperceptibly introduces another; a thunder-storm which rends the heavens is preceded by a period of impressive silence and warning; a battle is usually begun by skirmishing and tentative

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<sup>1</sup> "Homiletics," p. 300.

operations ; a legislative assembly does not enter upon important business at the first moment of its session, but the way is gradually cleared for more serious questions. The human mind, which, in its healthy state, has a sense of dignity and self-respect, does not like to be hurried, or compelled to move by another's impulse rather than by its own voluntary act ; it will not be pushed, but may be drawn. Some preparation of the mind is needed on the part of the audience for the full influence of the orator to be felt, or for the permanent influence and adoption of new ideas.

An introduction is generally necessary when a peculiar theme is to be treated of, or to be drawn from the text. When the theme is an ordinary or very familiar one, there is no necessity of a special exordium. The reasons for an exordium in political and forensic address, and which are absolutely required to meet opposing opinions and party views, do not seem equally to apply to the preacher and his audience, who are, it is to be supposed, well disposed toward him and ready to hear what he has to say. Even the principle sometimes set forth that the introduction must be drawn from the circle of ideas in which the discourse is to move, is only partially true ; for the text itself has already introduced this circle of ideas, the introduction is made by naming the text—the path is opened. The text and the theme stand over against each other, the one being the comprehensive statement of the contents

**Rhetorical  
aim of  
introduction.**

of the other ; now the aim of the introduction, rhetorically, or as it regards the treatment of the subject, is to mediate between the text and the theme. It is the way of arriving at the one from the other. It is not precisely the way in which the preacher himself arrives at the theme from the text ; it may be a shorter or it may be a



longer way. But the introduction is the genesis of the theme—the process of the text's crystallization into the theme. As the theme is the expression of the contents of the text, the introduction is the transporting of the hearer to where, so to speak, he will see and find for himself the true meaning or contents of the text. It is gathering the different threads together where they may be seized and grasped. In occasional sermons, the introduction mediates between the text and the occasion, setting forth the relation of the subject to the time and circumstances, and showing why it was chosen and its fitness.<sup>1</sup>

But what, let us ask definitely, are some of the objects to be gained by a good introduction?

1. To remove actual prejudices against the speaker. The preacher may have created an unfavorable impression by his course of action in some particular; he may have aroused the jealousy or antagonism of a certain class in his audience—the fashionable class, or the conservative class, or the radical class, or whatever it may be. He may possibly have traits of character, which, he is conscious, place him in an unfavorable light with his hearers, especially in regard to his introduction of particular subjects; he may have excited suspicions of his orthodoxy, or, at least, of his sincere belief in some portions of the Christian faith; and yet, although he is weak, imperfect, and inconsistent, the truth must be preached, the instruction must be given to the people: in the introduction, then, he is to feel his way through these popular prejudices, and dispel them, if they are unjust, without, perhaps, seeming to do so. It is

Objects to be  
gained by  
introduction.

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<sup>1</sup> See Palmer's "Homiletics," p. 532.

not often by direct allusions to himself that he can do this, but rather by indirect suggestions of the intrinsic importance of the theme, of the imperfection of preachers and of men, and of the perfection of truth.

2. To create a favorable regard for the speaker. He may be a young man, a comparative stranger; he may have an abstruse, or what may be called even an ambitious, theme; he should begin modestly; the old Jewish rabbis used to say that "the creation was made from night to morning, not from morning to night;" he should avoid making too great promises of what he intends to do; he should show an honest interest in the good of his hearers, without saying too much about it—above all things, avoiding flattery, which was the fault of some of the old French court preachers;<sup>1</sup> he should endeavor, in a simple, manly way, to bring himself into sympathy with his audience, and to gain their good will and willing hearing; and to be modest and in earnest, is the best way to effect this.

But while one should thus be modest it is not well to apologize in the introduction; this weakens impressions and diminishes the sense of authority in the preacher.

3. To create a favorable regard for the subject. The preacher is to turn the current of religious feeling, already set flowing, perhaps, by the previous devotional exercises, into the contemplation of some definite religious truth or duty, into some positive and special direction. In order to secure this end of a favorable regard toward his subject, (*a.*) he may state the intellectual advantages to be derived from discussing such a theme. The subject may be the doctrine of moral evil, or that of divine sovereignty; it may be said at the beginning,

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<sup>1</sup> See Baring Gould's "Post-Mediæval Preachers," pp. 45, 46, 47.

that these are the greatest problems of the human mind, meeting the philosopher as well as the theologian ; that they have called forth the strength of the best intellects ; that no problems are more difficult, and therefore none more deserving of the attention of thoughtful minds. (*b.*) He may state the connections of the subject with other more practical spiritual truths. He may remove the prejudice that the doctrine has no immediate practical bearing or utility, even as depravity, for instance, or the doctrine of sin, lies, in one sense, at the base of the whole Christian system of the atonement, regeneration, holiness, and the Christian life. (*c.*) He may make some historical allusions naturally connected with the theme, which always forms an attractive introduction. (*d.*) He may make it appear, at the very beginning, that the subject bears upon the welfare of all his hearers ; but one should be careful not to use hackneyed phrases about the greatness and importance of the subject in hand, and should shun stereotyped introductions like the "*constat inter omnes*" of the old scholastic preachers. The classic orators, it is true, had introductions prepared beforehand, which they could fit to any subject ; Cicero recommends this ; but times have changed, and the duty of the preacher, above all, requires simple earnestness and truth in all parts of the discourse. He should so treat his subject from the start, that his hearers will be impressed with the importance of it, without any formal asseveration of its importance. (*e.*) He may make general and modifying suggestions in the introduction ; for this is just the place for these incidental remarks, which cannot have a proper place anywhere else. The preacher, looking forward, wishes to give a certain turn to the discourse, or to draw forth a new idea or lesson from the text. In the in-

introduction he may skillfully prepare the way for this ; he may make the groove, which he will widen and deepen for the sermon to run in. In the introduction, also, he may set aside, in a few words, any false impressions which a certain text, or the foreshadowing of a certain subject, may awaken ; here, in a word, he is still free ; he has not yet bound himself to any particular line of thought, and he has the advantage of the fresh state of mind of his audience, and of the natural curiosity which is awaked at the first words of a discourse, to see what it may be, and what may be the metal of the speaker.

The qualities of a good introduction may be resolved chiefly into four—simplicity, modesty, fitness, and suggestiveness.

Qualities of a  
good  
introduction.

I. Simplicity. The first moments of a discourse, as has been said, are often the critical moments, and success or failure is sometimes contained in them ; for, one may see, that to begin a sermon in a stilted or highly artificial manner, is to insure its condemnation ; but as an ocean steamer puts to sea, when she is fully ready, with a steady motion, so a sermon should begin without display, but with a full and firm consciousness of power to reach the end in view.

This simplicity in the introduction may be violated, (a.) By too great abstruseness. There may be an interesting thought in the introduction, but it should not be so difficult and deep as at once to discourage attention ; it should be natural rather than abstruse. (b.) By too earnest argument. One should not plunge at once into argument, but should enter more cautiously upon the open, agitated sea of discussion. (c.) By too impassioned and imaginative language. An introduction should generally be calm. Coquerel says the occasion is extremely rare in the eloquence of the pulpit, for an



exordium to enter *ex abrupto* upon a theme. If the first words are uttered with vehemence the orator falls under the blow of Horace's question: "*Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?*"

And if the speaker succeed in thus commanding attention, it is very difficult to keep it up to the end. The process will generally be the reverse of what it ought to be, namely, from heat to cold, from an artificial earnestness and excitement to apathy.

It is better to rise from a calm beginning addressed principally to the good sense and understanding of men to the height of true feeling and conviction, than to sink from the height to the depth. The exordium of Massillon's funeral discourse on Louis XIV., "My brethren, God only is great," is celebrated and is remembered with admiration, while the discourse is forgotten. There may be a supposable occasion for a very striking, yes, startling introduction, yet these occasions are rare. The Bible is our teacher here; there is a quiet majesty in its utterances, a voice of simple nature, unadorned truth and calm authority, which it were wise to imitate.

It is not well, then, to be brilliant immediately, and prose is better than poetry to start with.

One may sometimes use a strong and homely figure to begin with, but generally anything like figurative language is in bad taste, until the mind is warmed up to it, and it glances off "like sparks from a working engine."

Appeals to feeling are, as a general rule, altogether out of place in the introduction; for what begins in excited feeling may end either in frenzy or in the depths of bathos. Bold flights of fancy and sensational language at first produce dulness at last. Cicero recommends an ornate introduction, in order to raise and embellish the character of what succeeds; but that is doubtful advice for the

preacher and for the present age. The simplicity of the introduction, however, should be rather in the expression than in the thought ; for it is a great blunder to begin a sermon with a trite truism, as, " The young may die, and the old must," and a very commonplace beginning generally kills the sermon, and is not simplicity. (*d.*) By indirectness of thought or style. One should be natural and easy in his introduction. All elaborate and circuitous language in the introduction, ingenious sentences and painfully wrought antitheses, are out of place ; for, generally, a direct marching up to a subject is best ; and to begin too far off may lead the hearer's mind to such a distance from the subject, that it cannot be brought back again ; but a simple directness, on the other hand, wins the confidence of the hearer. To conceal the subject of the sermon, and to spring it by surprise on the audience, appeals, after all, to an inferior motive, and seems to have something of clap-trap in it. The interest should come from the subject, and from one's power and earnestness in treating it : this is the beauty of Robertson's introductions, upon which we have commented ; they combine originality and clearness of thought. (*e.*) By being too long. It was quaintly said by one of John Howe's hearers that " he was so long laying the cloth that his hearers despaired of the dinner." There is no rule as to the length of an introduction, but only that it should be as short as possible without injuring the clearness of the statement, or the thought. Young preachers sometimes use up their best thoughts in the introduction, so that there is little more to say.

The introduction should not be a small homily in itself. Palmer says that an introduction should never at longest occupy more than an eighth of a sermon. In a word, an introduction, almost without exception, should be brief.

Cut down introductions mercilessly. Hearers like to have a preacher get right at the heart of his subject as soon as possible, and are wearied with tediously long prefatory remarks ; nor does divine truth lie in such unfortunate and obscure circumstances that it needs protracted effort to bring it to light, or to introduce it to the human mind. Biblical truth does indeed differ from scientific truth in this respect, that it is familiar and open to all, and that it is outwardly received as authority.

Augustine's introductions are brief, simple, and beautiful. Therein is particularly opposed to long introductions ; he says, "time spent in merely paving the way for the idea (of the discourse) might better be employed in the development of the idea itself." He recommends the immediate connection of the idea with some one of those plain moral or religious ideas which all understand and approve, namely, truth, happiness, or duty, and which can be done without circumlocution. No introduction is better than one which is long and wearisome. In fact, no introduction is best of all, if none is needed. Interest in the main subject is wasted, and cannot be easily revived. It is the experience of preachers, which is itself suggestive, that as one grows older he is inclined to cut off several pages of the introductions of his earlier written sermons.

2. Modesty. Self-conceit in the introduction is fatal ; and true modesty is ever the most effectual way of gaining the good will of an audience.

Allusions to one's self should be rare, and, if made, should be made with genuine delicacy ; for any want of respect in the speaker's manner toward the audience is revenged, often, by their indignation and contempt. A lofty style, to begin with, offends modesty as well as simplicity ; any exhibition of a sense of superior learn-

ing, wisdom, or thought is unfortunate ; and no modest man, even though he assume the office of teacher, will have such a feeling.

In Hobbes's " Brief to the Art of Rhetoric," he says, " That the hearer may be favorable to the speaker, two things are required : that he love him or he pity him." Now no one can love or pity a conceited man ; and yet modesty is not to sink into feebleness or self-humiliation, though the ancient orators recommend even timidity in the introduction, in order to win sympathy ; but this, of course, could not be recommended to a Christian preacher ; " for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind." Still, one who rises to speak on the great themes of the gospel, with a due sense of the responsibility of souls committed to his charge and guidance, may have a reasonable fear of not being equal to the greatness of the occasion.

3. *Fitness.* By this is meant that the introduction should be in keeping and harmony with the sermon ; it should spring from a thorough knowledge of the definite aim one has in view in the sermon. It implies adaptation, pertinence, and good judgment.

The introduction should have a proportionate and symmetrical relation, also, to the theme ; it should not be invested with independent proportions, as if it were a subject of its own, nor should it have the infelicity to forestall the argument or the important thoughts of the sermon, so that the interest should be all taken up in the introduction ; it should be confined to its own place and work.

4. *Suggestiveness.* The fruitful, suggestive, and original character of Robertson's introductions has been dwelt upon ; in them the attention of the audience is immediately fastened upon a fresh train of thought,



though simply expressed ; the door is thrown open to something new and powerfully attractive ; the mind is delighted with the prospect of obtaining new ideas on familiar but eternal truth, and of being led into a fresh field of instruction ; in a word, he succeeds in arousing *interest*, which is the great thing to be secured in an introduction.

Of course the temptation here is to false originality, to the saying of striking things ; and some preachers have a quaint and pungent way of beginning a sermon, which fastens attention, and yet borders somewhat too closely on wit ; and it is very easy for a witty minister to be too witty. He should try to make his wit a diffused element of life in the discourse, rather than to condense it into a sentence which strikes too smartly upon the sense of the ridiculous ; and even that which is profoundly original may be simply and naturally expressed. One may, indeed, notice in some of our best New England preachers, past and present, that the first sentence of their discourse is often a very weighty one—a sentence of true philosophical profundity—though it is so well thought through that it is expressed in a plain and simple way. The first sentence is thus often the germ of the sermon ; and it is often recommended that the first sentence of a sermon should be one that sets people to thinking ; but this profoundness of thought at starting is a hazardous thing, and unless well done, it is a signal failure ; unless the thought is truly profound, and at the same time put in a plain and practical form, it either confuses or disgusts an audience, so that simple good sense in the first sentence is, generally speaking, the safer course.

The following may be given as one example of a beautiful and suggestive introduction, from the old French

preacher, Michel le Faucheur, on the text in Rom. 8 : 27, "*Nous savons que toutes choses aident ensemble en bien à ceux qui aiment Dieu.*"

"*Notre texte contient fort peu de paroles, mais dont le sens est merveilleusement fécond. . . . Tout ainsi que quand Dieu, à la prière d'Elie, voulut ouvrir le ciel, comme à sa prière il l'avait fermé, la nuée que ce prophète vit montrer de la mer, en exécution de cette volonté favorable de Dieu, n'était pas plus grande que la paume de la main d'un homme, mais cependant en moins de rien elle couvrit le ciel de nuées et toute la terre de pluie, de même cette sentence, quoique fort brève, si vous la méditez attentivement, en moins d'une heure vous fera voir, par manière, tout le ciel rempli des merveilles de la providence de Dieu en la direction et en la conservation de tous ceux qui l'aiment, et vos âmes seront arrosées de toutes parts des consolations de sa grace.*"<sup>1</sup>

The sources of introductions are varied. To speak in a general way, introductions may be drawn from the context, or from the circumstances of the time

**Sources of introductions.**

or period in which the text was written, or spoken. In fact the introduction, if not drawn immediately from these, should at all events not be inharmonious in its spirit with the text itself. If after reading for our text an affecting narrative we begin to preach in a coldly moralizing way, we do in this way "rudely cut the nerve of harmony that connects the scriptural narrative with the hearts of our hearers."

But to speak more definitely, the sources of introductions, although greatly varied, may yet all be classified or brought under four different heads :

- I. The circumstances of the text. The time, place, and

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<sup>1</sup> Vinet's " Histoire de la Prédication," etc., p. 107.

occasion of the text may be given and described ; as the scenic surroundings of Paul preaching on the Areopagus, or the description of Athens, of Corinth, of Ephesus, of Rome, as forming attractive prefaces to many a text of the Acts and the Epistles. The historical period and the exact historical circumstances of the text, and also its local and philological relations, are always admissible : indeed, Theremin lays down the rule that the introduction, in some way or shape, should invariably be drawn from the context—certainly too rigid a requisition.

2. The relations and circumstances of the subject. These are explanatory observations, prefatory and general remarks ; or, it may be, a single word in the text taken and discussed for a moment ; and thus the way is prepared for the real subject, *e.g.*, “ Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Here one may begin to remark upon the main word “holiness,” upon its real meaning, its true evangelical import, and this will lead on gradually to the subject which shall comprehend the whole text of which “holiness” forms the essence.

3. General truth, or truths preparatory to the subject. This method of generalizing to begin with may, indeed, be carried to excess, and may lead the mind away from the definite subject in hand ; and it is therefore better to begin as nearly as possible to the thing itself, and not to indulge in introductory platitudes, as is often done in the introductions of Blair. It is well to take some specific truth or fact leading up to the subject, some fit comparison or similitude, some historical fact or proverb, or some striking quotation ; and sometimes an imaginary case may be supposed : as Massillon’s commencing one of his sermons with the idea of a trial or court-scene going on.

4. Circumstances of speaker and audience. This requires great tact, of which Cicero's "Pro Milone" and "In Catilinam" are fine examples.

Topics of introductions should be taken generally from things rather than persons, though historical examples, even if they are taken from secular history, are sometimes fitted to arouse attention, and they form happy introductions.<sup>1</sup>

Introductions are sometimes called "the crosses of preachers," because beginnings are difficult; but no introduction is better than a bad one; and sometimes it is best to plunge at once into deep waters. In fact, an informal introduction, which is simply commencing at once, is better than a formal one.

As to the time of writing the introduction, every one is his own best judge: perhaps it should not be the first or the last thing written; but it should be done when the mind is fully possessed of the subject, and when one cannot help saying just what he does, in order to lay the theme fitly before the audience. "As the introduction is only a subsidiary and a preparatory part of a discourse, the topics which it must embrace, and the form in which it should appear, cannot be fully known until the nature and form of the proposition and of the discussion are well ascertained by the speaker. Hence the proper time for the invention and composition of the introduction is after the subject has been thoroughly studied, and the general form of the discussion well settled in the mind."<sup>2</sup> This is also Quintilian's advice, who is especially full and excellent on the subject of the "exordium," proving that little can be added to what the ancients have said

<sup>1</sup> See Day's "Rhetoric," p. 48. A series of hints as to the sources of exordiums, or introductions, is given in Vinet's "Homiletics," p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> Day's "Rhetoric," p. 48.



upon oratory.' Vinet says, "There is always an exordium which is better than any other, and it is that on which the true orator ordinarily falls;" therefore it is well for the preacher to have before his mind, or to set before his mind, precisely what end he has in view, and what he is conscious he is able to do to attain that end; and this will guide him to say the right thing to begin with, for the introduction should ever have an eye to the end.

#### SEC. 15. *The Explanation.*

The explanation (*Die Erklärung*) of a sermon embraces all that is required for the purpose of elucidating the exact meaning and force of the text, and of thus obtaining from it the true subject of the discourse. It refers exclusively to the text.

What is the  
explanation.

Vinet says that "the explanation is purely definition, and not judgment." It is the defining of the actual terms and contents of the text, so that its true theme may be distinctly presented to the mind. It not only embraces the etymological definition of the text, or that of its verbal terms, but, above all, its rational definition, or that of its complete object of thought; it is, in fact, bringing out in its wholeness the full and entire meaning which the text is intended to convey.

An "expository" sermon may be said to be wholly taken up with the explanation; but in every ordinary sermon, with few exceptions, the explanation has its distinct place, and is applied to the precise matter of defining the text, so that its true subject may be presented. It does nothing more than this; it may suggest, but it does not formally state the subject; it leads the way to

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<sup>1</sup> "Instit." B. iii., c. 9. s. 8.

the proposition and argument, but it is clearly distinguished from them.

A sermon, according to Vinet, really consists of but two parts—the explanation and the proof ; but we prefer to limit the use of the explanation to the simple object of defining what the text means.

As to the extent of the explanation. The explanation, to speak in more general terms, comprehends narrative, description, or picturing historical discussion  
**Extent of the explanation.** of the outer circumstances of the text, combined with a drawing out of the inner sense of the passage, its real life, contents, and aim ; not so much for the purpose of one's own instruction and satisfaction as for the instruction and building up of the people (the Church of Christ) in the faith. The people have knowledge and understanding in respect of divine truth ; but preaching is to increase, perfect, rectify, and direct that knowledge. The preacher is to give a productive and practical aim to his explanations and instructions, so that the people may see how the truth applies to them.

The explanation, therefore, should not be scientific wholly, but practical and edifying. The preacher's conscience and responsibility are often greatly tried in endeavoring to give the real explanation of a passage, in opposition perhaps to traditional renderings, and to his own preconceived ideas. He is never to set an erroneous rendering in the place of a true one for the sake of effect or impression, for this is a pious fraud. Still, a young preacher especially should not be too forward, or rash, in this rectifying process. The explanation instead of being a dry ought to be a quickening influence. Explanation deals in words, it is true, but chiefly in things (*sach erklärungen*). It goes to the true teaching of the word, the substantial or spiritual truth, the real thought

of God, the divine fact involved, that which "is nutritive, edifying, sanctifying."<sup>1</sup>

But to look more particularly at the extent of the explanation, we would say that it includes both the fact and the sentiment of the text, in other words it has to do principally with the narrative and the exposition.

1. The narrative. This is the investigation and setting forth of the more purely objective truth of the passage in its relations to time, place, and circumstance. It is viewing the text in the concrete. It is the consideration of the why, how, and what of the passage, especially in relation to the time in which it originated. Great skill may be used here in accurately developing, in their order of time, all the important and perhaps hidden facts involved in the text; in taking it apart, and showing the true order and harmonious relations of the parts to one another and to the whole. Where the text is a very easy and familiar one, all the explanation that is needed may be included in a few words of the introduction; but, generally speaking, some discussion is required to set forth the facts of the text clearly and distinctly, even without developing any new truth from it, or proving anything in particular by it. A lawyer usually makes the explanatory narrative the most important and telling part of his address or plea; he shows his consummate skill in collating facts, in explaining circumstances and events, so as to bear upon any particular point or principle that he desires to establish; thus Cicero's oration for Milo has its chief strength in the exquisite skill of the narrative.

This is also the place for description, especially historical description, although that refers, strictly, to place

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narrative.

<sup>1</sup> See Otto's "Praktische Theologie," v. i., p. 318.

rather than to time. Geographical, historical, and pictorial descriptions in a sermon should be brief, truthful, and vivid, and not highly wrought or poetical. The imagination may be indulged, but it should be remembered that a sermon is prose, not poetry. When the materials for description are ample, they should not be so largely drawn upon as to make it apparent that the sermon was written in order to give the preacher an opportunity to discuss the topography of Jerusalem or Athens, or to paint a glowing picture of a sacred scene, in order to display his fancy and learning ; but, at the same time, everything which tends to vivify divine truth, and draw attention to it, and make it fresh and forcible, is perfectly justifiable. Whately says, "Let not your sermons be avowedly hortatory, nor begin with exhortation ; let your apparent object be explanation. Ignorance is not the greatest, but it is the first evil to be removed ; it is also the one most in your power to remove, and it is one which people will not be, in the outset, so much disgusted to be told of. And do not think anything irrelevant, however remote it may seem from Christian practice, that tends to interest them in Scripture studies and religious topics." <sup>1</sup>

2. The exposition. This is, by all means, the principal part of the explanation. It regards the text in the abstract rather than in the concrete ; and it is more strictly the definition of the precise terms and contents of the text. It does not concern itself about the text, so much as it does with the very words and substance of the text. It comprehends, first of all, a correct verbal definition of the passage, a literal explanation of the terms of the text—simple, it may be, in its results, yet one that demands thorough

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Richard Whately," v. i. p. 210.



study and scholarship ; and, in addition to this, and above all, it includes an honest effort to arrive at the internal meaning of the passage. It is viewing the text more subjectively. It is looking at it, or rather into it, as taken out of its relations to time, place, and circumstance. It is endeavoring to come at the absolute truth, or the general principle involved in the text. This is the most important idea of the text, because the outward facts and circumstances of the text are comprehended in this inner meaning. This definition of the idea contained in an important passage of divine truth is often the most difficult and taxing part of the whole sermon ; for nothing is more difficult than definition, especially the definition of ideas. It is the complete separation of the idea from all other ideas and objects of thought. It is looking at it as a whole, so that the proposition follows this mastery of the true idea, or the essential meaning of the text, as a matter of course.

There may exist doubt as to the true meaning of a text, and several meanings may be claimed by the best scholars and thinkers ; here patient and honest thought is required. There may be, also, wholly different ideas, and classes of ideas, drawn from the same passage ; and there may be, further still, various shades of ideas comprehended in it : in the explanation, therefore, it is necessary not only to get at the best exposition of the true principle contained in the text, but to have a clear and independent idea of our own concerning it ; to come ourselves to a distinct and original conception of the truth taught in the text. This view should be clearly defined, and should be the result of accurate investigation with all the helps of scholarship ; and then what follows in the other portions of the sermon will have good foundations to rest upon.

There are some classes of texts which particularly demand explanation. Almost every text, being in a dead language, requires some brief explanation ;

**Texts that especially demand explanation.** but those which absolutely demand it may be chiefly divided into three classes :

1. Typical and figurative texts. These all contain some true meaning, and that true meaning, or literal truth, conveyed by them, is to be set forth, *e.g.*, Ps. 84 : 11, "For the Lord is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory ; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Here are two distinct ideas of the nature of God metaphorically inwoven (it would seem) through the whole verse. God is not only a sun—the source of light and truth—but a shield—the source of strength, protection, daily providential oversight ; he is the giver both of glory and grace ; he is so as regards the whole of our life, external and internal.

Take even such a familiar text as the words of our Lord in John 4 : 10, its very profoundness lies in its simplicity. It requires thought to explain clearly what is meant by Christ's giving living water and to bring out the points of resemblance between living truth and living water ; or how they both equally may be called life-giving. There are many passages which contain events that are figurative, as well as texts whose words are simply figurative, such as the symbolic acts of the Old Testament prophets, and our Saviour's washing the feet of his disciples, and his driving out the money-changers from the temple, some of which actions are capable of wrong constructions. Then there are the parables that require study and thought to explain in an edifying way.

2. Texts whose meaning is complicated and open to controversy.

3. Texts of deep and pregnant meaning, not at once obvious, but connected, it may be, with some previous truth, argument, or fact. Especially under this head are to be classed texts of profound spiritual meaning.

The materials or sources of the explanation are manifold.

1. Philological analysis. The first thing **Materials or sources of explanation.** to be sought in explanation, is a definition of the very terms of the text, the coming at its literal meaning. This embraces a close and accurate verbal exegesis of the passage, and the different modes of stating and explaining the text, or the different views which may be and have been taken of it, as well as the refutation of false modes of interpreting the text, those, perchance, which are in common use. One may thus judiciously present the more correct translation of a text: *e.g.*, Rom. 12 : 1, "That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (*τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν*); the closer meaning of *λογικὴν* here, as is the sense in other passages, in John 4 : 23, Rom. 7 : 25, is "spiritual," pertaining to the spiritual, or to the soul's life; or the passage in Phil. 3 : 20, "Our conversation is in heaven," where the word *πολιτευμα*, rendered "conversation," is, more strictly and nobly, "citizenship." The drawing out and binding together of a complicated parable, like that of the unjust steward, which requires the strict defining of terms and their connections, as well as the elucidation of the meaning of the whole, and the explanation of such a weighty, profound passage as 1 Tim. 3 : 16, are familiar examples of the absolute need of accurate scholarly analysis. Most of the passages which we may take from the Pauline epistles need something of this scientific criticism ex-

pended upon them. But, as Coquerel says, the preacher should come out of the atmosphere of the school into a higher atmosphere of sacred criticism, where there is a simple and earnest desire to arrive at divine truth. In fine, the critical scholarship and pure learning required in the sermon thus generally come in the explanation; there they find a true place, though even there they should not be obtruded, and should manifest results rather than processes.

2. Examination of the relative position of the text, or the study of what is called the "context." This, in another connection, we have before remarked upon; we refer to it now as having relation to the true rendering of the passage. The detaching of texts from their context has been a source of mischief in preaching as great as, at the beginning of the recent war, the too great separation of our smaller military divisions from the main body was to the success of our arms. The words of our Lord, as they are of special weight, should not be isolated, but should be carefully interpreted as they stand in connection with all their circumstances of time, place, and occasion.

3. Comparison with parallel passages and with the main scope of Scripture. This fills up cavities, enriches the meaning, clears obscurities, and modifies and defines the limits of the truth taught by the particular passage.

4. Development of historical facts. The preacher ought not to presume too much on the intelligence of his congregation in this respect—that they are all well informed even on the most familiar historical points; but he should bring to bear the animating influence of a rich and wide historical knowledge. This is a great source of interest. The most minute historical allusion often throws sudden light upon the text. John 7 : 37, "In the



last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." This was uttered upon the very day on which the priests employed the symbol of water in the temple, and in many ways made this water-symbolism strikingly prominent. As another instance, Matthew, who relates to us Christ's gracious words addressed to publicans and sinners, was himself a publican. In the parable of the wedding garment, there is some reason to think that the key of the story lies in the Eastern custom of the guests accepting as a free gift the wedding robe from the host and not himself bringing the robe to the feast. Such an historical fact as the military Roman law which required the use of any man or beast along the road illustrates the sentence, "If any man compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." The closing of the gate in Oriental cities, even to this day, at an early hour in the evening, gives force to the Saviour's words, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able."

5. Scientific illustration. The preacher should lay his hand on this boldly; and he may thus, in an eminently scientific age like the present, win new interest for religious truth, which is unscientific and undefined. What is called the modern science of "Egyptology," and it might also be now added the science of "Assyriology," founded upon the inductive process, has totally demolished the triumph of false science—in regard to a large portion of biblical antiquities—so destructive of the authenticity of the Scriptures.

In like manner geological science is a splendid contribution to theology, as to the main truth of the unity of the cosmical plan of creation.

Astronomy, the star-eyed science, seems peculiarly

allied to celestial truth, not only in a figurative sense, but analogically, as setting forth the unchangeable and orderly character of God's physical laws.

Chemistry, too, opens fine illustrations of revealed truths ; and of the correlation of forces, not brought about by mere laws of matter but by an intelligent cause beyond the phenomenal, and absolutely controlling changes.

Scientific investigations upon the subject of the origin of man and the law of evolution in creation may also, stated in their just limitations, throw light on spiritual truth, and lay bare another of the grand and simple laws of God's working.

Science, as well as art, and all the arts, will become more and more the auxiliary to the interpretation of divine truth. Chrysostom, Luther, Chalmers, Arnold, and even John Wesley, were not afraid of learning and science, considering that the principles of the natural and spiritual worlds emanate from the same mind, although revelation will never be squared to science ; and we may look in vain for this, for the Bible is not, and never can be made, a scientific book. But there is one field where a little scientific knowledge is all-important to the preacher ; and that is, in the geography of biblical lands : he should know the difference between Antioch in Syria and Antioch in Pisidia, and what was meant by the "Asia" of the New Testament, and the history and derivation of the "Galatians" of Asia Minor, and such geographical and historical facts as clear up difficulties in biblical interpretation.

6. Application of the laws of common sense. Everything must be brought to that. Great scholars sometimes lose their common sense ; and the use of the homely and independent principle of common sense will

do away with many perverse and fanciful interpretations of Scripture which have been sustained by learning falsely applied.

7. The setting forth of the animus of the writer. This would influence the meaning of much that was written by John and James, and Peter and Paul ; and while the marked differences of the Pauline, Petrine, and Johannean manifestations of divine truth are presented to us in a forcible manner in such a work, for example, as Neander's "Planting and Training," and in other good works on biblical theology, the careful study of the inspired writings themselves is better still. Inspiration admits the human element, and takes form from the peculiarities of individual mind and character ; and, indeed, we have reason to suppose that human idiosyncrasies were taken advantage of by the Spirit for the development of particular truths. Paul's mind, experience, and culture wonderfully fitted him for the expression and inculcation of the liberal doctrines of Christianity, which embrace the human race, and the universal application of the moral principles of redemption.

The peculiar condition of the author's mind at the time of writing or speaking is also important as affecting his meaning. Our Lord himself, when he was in the humblest and obscurest circumstances, spoke the words, "I am the light of the world." When Paul was in the gloomy depths of the Mamertine prison he exhorted men to glory in the cross of Christ.

One expression, also, of a scriptural writer may be set over against another expression of the same writer, uttered in entirely different circumstances and states of mind ; thus the character and history of David abound in striking contrasts ; cross lights are strong lights.

Above all, as the Scriptures are an inspired book, the

great aim of the expositor should be to come at "the mind of the Spirit," of the real author of revelation.

8. By setting forth the animus and spirit of the age in which the text was written. The celestial utterances of the "Sermon on the Mount," and the broad precepts of Christianity in the Epistles, may be contrasted with the narrow Jewish theology, the clashing Greek philosophies, and the imperious and ferocious ideas of the best Roman civilization of the time.

9. By showing the character and condition of the persons addressed. "Feed my sheep" would not, in all probability, have been addressed to the loving apostle John, but rather to the ambitious, impetuous, forth-putting Peter. In like manner the Epistle to the Philippians was written to a kind of people very different from that to which the Epistle to the Corinthians was written.

10. By showing the particular object for which the passage was spoken or written. "Sell all that thou hast" was not spoken to a poor man, but was addressed to the peculiar form of selfishness in which a wealthy young man's impenitence was garnered up. Our Lord's parables were intended to arouse thought, and to sow truth in the hearts of a people where the direct word of truth would have been treated with contempt, would have been trampled under foot. The Oriental indirectness of Scripture, not the less powerful because not at once perceived, is often a beautiful feature, which should be studied in something of the spirit of wisdom and love in which it was originally uttered or written.

11. By bringing forth the hidden tone and qualities of the text. That is, by listening to it not so much with the ear of the mind as with the ear of the heart, and catching its true spirit. Even its rhetorical qualities of naturalness, beauty, and force are not to be neglected ;



but by long meditation, and, above all, by prayer, one should strive to penetrate into the inmost soul of a passage, till its full original tone comes out. One should look into his own soul, and see how a text responds to his own spirit, since the study of the laws of the soul now will give one a key to unlock spiritual truth spoken ages ago, for the human heart is the same, and God is the same. The study of the laws of the divine mind will alone enable one to penetrate into the hidden meaning of the divine word; the spirit only comprehends the mind of the Spirit. "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are spiritually discerned."

As to the qualities of the explanation, it should be—

1. True. It should develop the true meaning of the text, neither more nor less—not the meaning which this one or that one would give it, or which we ourselves, perhaps, would desire to give it. Honesty in the explanation strengthens all other parts of the discourse. One may strive for the greatest vividness of impression in bringing out the full idea of the passage; but when he goes beyond the truth taught, then it is an unworthy means of impression, which will react disastrously. It is even better to understate than to overstate the truth.

Qualities  
of the  
explanation.

In regard to exegetical explanations generally, K. R. Hagenbach says: "Practical exegesis must be the result of scientific exegesis, and a conscientious preacher will offer to the people no exposition which cannot be scientifically justified."

2. Perspicuous. The explanation is not the place for discursiveness; there all should be exact and concise, clear and convincing. That is laying foundations. Defi-

dition should be neat, proper, and finished work.<sup>1</sup> One should avoid learned terms, and should produce the results rather than the terms of philological exegesis. In the evolution of long passages it is particularly essential to avoid obscurity ; and it is well to seize upon the main idea of the passage, and make that stand out clearly, while the subordinate parts are grouped around it.

3. Brief. Jonathan Edwards is said, by good judges of his sermonizing, to have spent too much time in exposition, thus sometimes even confusing the true sense of the passage. Modern learning should expedite explanation. But sometimes it is not possible to make the explanation brief, for the whole sermon may depend upon, and, in fact, consist of, the evolving of a particular and perhaps recondite meaning of the text. Brevity is violated, (*a.*) By explaining things which need no explanation ; a sermon is often rendered insufferably tedious in this way ; (*b.*) By seeking to explain simple ideas, or absolute truths, which cannot be analyzed, such as " God," " love," " life," " spirit ;" (*c.*) By making side issues, or going out of the way to explain difficulties which the text might suggest, but which it does not suggest to any in the congregation, and which do not fall within the scope of the sermon to clear up. The common mind is wearied with such excursions to explain difficulties that do not originate in itself, and which it cares nothing about. Solid difficulties it can appreciate, and it will patiently bear with their explanation. Those difficulties are chiefly practical—those hard things in truth, doctrine, and life, especially in the beginning of the spiritual life, of which all men have some experience. While the explanation is thus concise, it need not be

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<sup>1</sup> Quintilian's " Institutes," B. vii., c. 3, s. 1.

dry. It should not be a mere analysis of words and sentences, but a search after the living truth, conducted with animation and zest. "Definition," Vinet says, "as much as possible, should excite and stimulate the free and vital forces of the soul. Perfect definition is that which at the same time gives knowledge, comprehension, feeling, and faith."<sup>1</sup>

4. Modest. There may be all the scholarship that is needed in it, but it should be modestly expressed. Any pretentious display of commentators and names of learned authors, especially foreign authors, if harmless, is foolish.

5. It should suggest the proposition or subject of the sermon. It should build up the discourse to this point, where the proposition stands forth from all these preparatory scaffoldings of definition, firm and clear. There should be a natural and logical step from the explanation up to the proposition. The proposition—the explanation seems to say—is thus the great lesson of the text. "Whatever," says Abbé Maury, "in this part of the discourse, doth not lead to the principal parts of a sermon, is useless."

6. It should bear upon every part, even upon the conclusion, of a sermon. The explanation should skillfully prepare for each after step and thought; it should lay its train for every future blow. While there is development after the explanation, there should yet be the introduction of no absolutely new or foreign truth in the progress of the sermon, the idea of which, or the ground of the introduction of which, is not in some way brought out or suggested in the explanation.

As to the time and place of the explanation, its natural place is immediately after the introduction; but it is

<sup>1</sup> "Homiletics," p. 169.

sometimes intermingled with the introduction, and sometimes takes the place of it. The more important of the two should precede. Nevertheless, although we have assigned to the explanation a formal place immediately after the introduction, and though the best authorities, ancient and modern, would give it this place, yet even this rule is not a rigid one ; for however or wherever, in the course of a sermon, we *define* the text, and bring out its true sense more clearly, there is the explanation. It may be direct or indirect ; it may precede or follow the theme ; it may be in the nature of elaborate analysis, or of more brief, condensed synthesis ; but the explanation, in all cases, is the use of the critical faculty employed upon the interpretation of the text, rather than the exercise of the logical or more strictly reasoning faculty, which arrives at general truths, and develops the ultimate relations of the truth which is thus distinctly evolved.

#### SEC. 16. *The Proposition.*

“ A proposition,” says Whately, “ signifies a sentence in which something is said, affirmed, or denied, of another.”

“ That which is spoken of is called the ‘ subject ’ of the proposition ; and that which is said of it is called the ‘ predicate ; ’ and these two are called the ‘ terms ’ of the proposition, from their being in natural order the extremes or boundaries of it.”

A proposition is either logical or rhetorical. A logical proposition is a judgment expressed in words ; as, “ The character of sin is progressive.” A logical proposition demands proof.

A rhetorical or general proposition is the simple announcement of any fact or truth ; as “ The immuta-



bility of the law ;" or, put into a more formal statement, " My subject of discourse is the immutability of the law." A rhetorical proposition admits of general discussion without strictly demanding proof.

But what, definitely, is the proposition of a sermon? The proposition of a sermon (*Der Hauptsatz*) is that portion in which the subject or the theme of the sermon is more distinctly and more formally announced.

**What is the  
proposition of  
a sermon.**

The place of such a proposition may be at the beginning or at the end of a discourse, according to the method which we pursue—whether we take a given truth and analyze it, or from its various scattered elements we build it up gradually into the enunciation of some general synthetic truth.

**Place of  
proposition.**

The place, time, and method of announcing the proposition may be thus varied.

It may, however, be laid down as an almost invariable principle, that it increases the facility of apprehension and the degree of interest on the part of the audience, to announce, as near the beginning of the discourse as possible, what is the subject under discussion.

There should be at all events a definite subject in the speaker's mind, a main idea about which all other ideas cluster, and toward which all other thoughts tend ; and it aids the hearer also to know as soon as may be practicable what this main thought is. The transition, indeed, may be somewhat gradual from the subject lying in the preacher's mind to the formal proposition in which it becomes embodied ; but the process should be toward that formal expression or proposition, thus transferring the subject from the mind of the speaker to that of the hearer.

Therefore, as a general rule, the proposition, in some more or less distinct shape, should, as soon as possible, follow the explanation. At all events, the preacher should have a definite proposition or subject to speak to, whether he announces it sooner or later, or whether he announces it formally or not.

But the subject may be a complex one, involving many particular subjects, or propositions, under some more general theme ; different parts of the same subject, or different views of the same subject. In such cases the proposition must be brought forward in parts, in the form of a more gradual development of the subject, at various stages of the discourse.

Perhaps, also, in some cases, it would not do to announce the subject at once ; the audience are not prepared for it, or they may be prejudiced against it, or they may be entirely ignorant of it. At all events, some process of preparation is needed to clear the way for the definite statement of the subject.

The word of God is to be placed in a special light, to be adapted to the special need of the soul, of the time, of the congregation. Of course the transition from the exordium to the proposition should not be harsh and abrupt. It should be free and natural. The principle of transition is one especially to be studied in the composition of sermons.

There are, however, few subjects that a minister is called to preach upon which, having drawn them freely from the text, he may not clearly and boldly announce at the outset, or, at least, in the initial portion of his discourse.

Mullois, the Catholic writer, says, " Let it be perceived at once what the subject is, and what you intend to say. Sketch out your truth in a few sententious words, clearly

and emphatically enunciated. Let there be none of those vague and halting considerations which give the speaker the air of a man who is blindfolded, and strikes at random ; none of those perplexing exordiums wherein every conceivable fancy is brought to bear upon a single idea, and which frequently elicit the remark, 'What is he driving at? What topic is he going to discuss?' Let the subject-matter be vigorously stated at the outset, so that it may rivet the minds and engage the attention of the audience."<sup>1</sup>

It is true that in the *meditative* discourse, especially recommended by Fénelon, in which the thought develops itself from within, and flows along in the more hidden currents of a contemplative mind, the discourse would cease altogether to flow where it was confined in the strict bounds of a proposition. In such a discourse the proposition is not formally announced, but rather is suggested through the whole course of the sermon. It dawns upon the hearer out of the apparent obscurity of the discussion like the gradual light of day. Such a style of sermon requires a peculiar theme and a peculiar genius ; and in unskilful hands, or from a mind not in the highest degree spiritual, if it were very commonly adopted, it would be disastrous to profitable and impressive teaching in the pulpit.

The significance and importance of the proposition to the strength and beauty of the discourse cannot be better illustrated than in the familiar example of a tree. If the argument forms the branches, the proposition forms the trunk, and the text the root. How can there be a tree without a trunk, or a discourse without a proposition? The trunk, before it disparts

The  
significance  
and importance  
of the  
proposition.

<sup>1</sup> "The Clergy and the Pulpit," p. 118.

itself into divisions, is narrow, rigid, fixed ; it is not the graceful part of the tree ; it is not, apparently, the living part of the tree ; but how could there be any life or grace without it ? The proposition is just this definite, unyielding, all-comprehending part of the sermon ; the strength of the discourse is bound up in it ; all the life of the sermon runs through it to the minutest extremity, while it draws its life immediately from the text, or the divine word. As one tree has generally one trunk and one character, and bears one kind of fruit and leaf, and is distinguished from all other trees, so one sermon should have one subject and one aim. Dr. Emmons was of this opinion. He says of himself, " For this reason I seldom preached textually, but chose my subject in the first place, and then chose a text adapted to the subject. This enabled me to make my sermons more simple, homogeneous, and pointed, while, at the same time, it served to confine the hearers' attention to one important leading sentiment. Those who preach textually are obliged to follow the text in all its branches, which often lead to different and unconnected subjects. Hence, by the time the preacher has gone through all the branches of the text, his sermon will become so complicated that no hearer can carry away any more of it than a few striking, unconnected expressions ; whereas, by the opposite mode of preaching, the hearer may be master of the whole discourse, which hangs together like a fleece of wool." <sup>1</sup>

Although we cannot agree with Dr. Emmons's view of textual preaching, and of selecting a subject before a text, it is well to have his positive views upon the matter of a proposition.

The rigidity of a previously selected human theme may

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<sup>1</sup> Park's " Life of Emmons," p. 294.



sometimes act disastrously upon a sermon and destroy the life which runs in freer and at the same time deeper currents in a passage of the word of God, whose unity should be sought for in itself, and not out of itself in a preconceived proposition.

But whatever may be true of a composition to be read, a spoken address needs some distinct subject to speak upon ; the speaker needs it to give him concentration, and the majority of hearers, also, who do not or cannot make accurate discriminations, need to have something definite before them.

As to the substance or matter of the proposition, there are some rules to be observed.

1. There should be a unity of the parts of the proposition with the whole. The unity of the sermon depends upon the unity of the subject, and the subject is one which can be stated in a single proposition. There may be different parts, and widely distinct parts, of the subject discussed, but still they should all be comprehended, or be capable of being stated, in one more general subject ; as, (1.) Where the proposition has several subordinate parts ; *e.g.*, " The means of spiritual growth"—(*a.*) communion with God, (*b.*) cultivation of the affections, (*c.*) active service, etc. (2.) Where there is a general predicate of the coordinate parts of one whole ; *e.g.*, " The nature, design, and importance of prayer." It is evident here that the last is the main idea, or the general predicate of all, and the discussion of the others should tend to the confirmation of the last. (3.) Where there are other topics of inquiry, to which the proposition fairly leads. Thus, having established the proposition that there is such a thing as a visible church, we may go on to show our relations to it, and its relations to us and other men.

Substance  
and matter  
of the  
proposition.

2. The proposition should be plainly involved or implied in the text. Its great beauty is to correspond with the meaning and spirit of the text. No theme other than that which finds its ground in the text should be employed.

Sometimes the theme is apparent, but generally reflection is required, a patient circumspection that takes in the connection of the text with all that precedes and follows, and that enters deeply into the thought and spirit of the writer. It is necessary to understand thoroughly the whole environment of the passage, so as to get at its main idea ; or, at least, at some legitimate issue, with which the main thought is connected ; and, if the text is complex, to come at the higher thought which binds all its parts together, even if this be not contained in the text itself. We may thus take for our proposition a comprehensive or a special theme, if it be legitimately drawn from the text—let it be, for example, that contained in 1 Pet. 2 : 11–20. We may inquire here what is the higher or comprehensive thought that connects these verses—viz., “The elevated mind which the Christian should maintain in relation to earthly things.”<sup>1</sup>

Often the text is the theme pure, as in 2 Cor. 3 : 17 ; and it would be pedantical in such a case to use any terms other than those of the text ; but it is generally necessary to bring what lies in the text into one particular point of view. A sermon has been called an ellipse with two points, text and theme. This ellipse should be as perfect as possible. Sometimes the proposition is too wide for the text ; as John 14 : 13, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son”—it would hardly be proper to

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<sup>1</sup> Otto's “Prak. Theol.”

derive from this the subject of the general use of prayer ; the more limited subject is, " Prayer in the name of Jesus."

Subjects drawn from whatever text, or not drawn from any text at all, may sometimes be too big, or comprehensive, as " religion," " sin," " evil," " Christianity," and " God." Sometimes, on the other hand, the proposition is too small or too simple ; thus from the text in Ephesians 4 : 25, " Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor ; for we are members one of another," to make the proposition simply " The putting away of lying," whereas it is a more positive and at the same time more complex subject, viz., " The duty of truthfulness as made obligatory by the membership of Christ." Subjects may be too curious and insignificant ; like " The nature of white lies ;" " The necessity of attending to one's health ;" " The use of tobacco ;" " The number of times prayer should be made daily ;" " newspaper slanders ;" and " extravagance in dress ;" things of considerable practical importance, it may be, and which may be noticed incidentally, but which are not worthy of forming in themselves the sole theme of a sacred discourse, not being the simple expression of comprehensive principles, whether good or bad, but rather the outcomes of actual life.

Preachers should strike the parent vice on the head, and not run around after the thousand little wriggling snaky brood.

The same text may have different sides to it, and may suggest quite different themes ; how many sides, for instance, a text like Matthew 6 : 13 has ! All that we should be careful for is, that the theme be truly grounded in the text. Sometimes we cannot find a text which corresponds precisely to our subject ; the proposition should then be made as identical as possible, and we may be

obliged to use a general text in preaching on a particular theme, and so *vice versa*.

3. The proposition should include, essentially, all that is to be discussed in the sermon ; no less and no more. The proposition is comprehended in the text, and the sermon in the proposition ; one should therefore endeavor to make every word in the proposition suggestive of the sermon. The sermon or discussion is contained in the proposition as parts in a whole. The proposition is a handle of the sermon, to take it all up together, and a rudder of the sermon, to guide it in its definite course of thought. In a doctrinal sermon, especially, the proposition should be restricted to exactly what is discussed, except when a special advantage is to be gained by a connected view of the relations of doctrines ; therefore we should strive to make the proposition as wide and comprehensive as we wish to make the discussion itself.

As to the structure and qualities of the proposition, the general idea of a good proposition is, that it

Structure  
and qualities  
of the  
proposition. should be,

I. Plain and simple. It should be plain and simple without being commonplace.

This simplicity of form may be violated, (*a.*)

By too scientific and philosophical a statement of the theme. It should, on the contrary, be as concrete and popular as possible. Abstract and singular themes characterized the preaching of the eighteenth century ; thus one of Reinhard's themes for a sermon was, "Upon the habit of the human mind to be indifferent toward a long and earnestly desired good, when the moment of possession came." Another instance of a strained proposition is also from the German, "That it is not difficult for the Christian to make himself friends in entirely unexpected and disagreeable situations."



(*b.*) By the typical and metaphysical statement, a form not to be used when the text itself is a figure. Figure in a proposition, it is true, is sometimes beautiful : such as "Christ the good shepherd," "Christ the rock of ages." But this last form of typifying the Saviour has been carried to an extravagant pitch ; and German preachers have preached upon "Christ a carpenter," "a hat-maker," "a tailor," and "a clucking hen." Anything fanciful in the proposition is peculiarly out of place ; for if plain, strong common sense should appear anywhere, it is in the proposition ; there may be carving and ornament in other parts of the vessel, but we want the rudder to be made of oak and iron. These are some illustrations of propositions from the German preacher Harms : "Unbelief is ingratitude," or shorter still, "Unglaube ist Undank." "The happiness of the unhappy."

"Where your treasure is there your heart is."

(1.) As thou lovest so thou livest.

(2.) As thou livest so thou diest.

(3.) As thou diest so thou continuest.

These are from Schleiermacher :

"Love is the fulfilling of the law."

(1.) It teaches all.

(2.) It does all.

(3.) It possesses all.

"What we should fear and what we should not fear."

(1.) What not.

(2.) What.

This is from Tholuck :

"How God draws near to man and how man draws near to God."

This is from Palmer :

"What we are ; what we shall be ; what we should be."

2. Neat and condensed. This is for its easier use and remembrance. All unnecessary synonyms and weakening qualifications are to be avoided in the proposition. Compactness is an especial good quality. Any superfluous disjunctives, such as "or," "notwithstanding," "nevertheless," "so far forth," etc., should be dispensed with, and neat strength should be sought for. The proposition may sometimes comprehend in itself the divisions of the sermon, and announce them, thus making all the merely mechanical parts of the sermon as compact as possible ; and this, perhaps, is the best way, generally, to construct a proposition. The proposition may also consist of the grand divisions themselves. There may be several propositions ; these form parts of one subject : coming one after another, they thus gradually develop the entire thought, subject, or comprehensive proposition.

3. Specific. Even the unity of the proposition must be sometimes sacrificed to attain this particularity of theme. The discussion of specific subjects—of the species under the genus, of the particular under the general—is indicative of an acute mind. The more restricted a proposition is, the smaller portion of a truth discussed, if ably discussed, the more intensity of interest will be aroused, and the more impression for good will be made. Where different kinds of propositions offer themselves, then the more specific one is to be preferred ; and every proposition should express a definite and complete idea.

4. It should not be stated in the language of the text. There should be a fresh form given to it ; and although drawn immediately from the text, it should, if possible, present some new form or aspect of the old truth. An exception to this rule is, where the text is itself propositional in form, and makes a complete theme, as in that

noblest and profoundest text in the Bible, "For God is love."

And sometimes, also, the title of a sermon which is drawn directly from the terms of the text may form its theme. Thus a parable may form both the text and the proposition, or theme, of a sermon, without drawing out a definite subject in a propositional form, *e.g.*, "The Unjust Judge," "The Ten Virgins," "The Lost Son."

In like manner in treating a scriptural narrative, the subject oftentimes may be simply the gathering up of the whole passage into a rhetorical proposition, or a titular form, as Mark 14 : 1-9, "Christ in the house of Bethany ;" John 13 : 18-30, "The going out of Judas ;" Matt. 22 : 15-22, "History of the Tribute Money ;" Mark 16 : 1-18, "The Resurrection of Jesus."

5. It should be prudently expressed. It should not lay out too large a subject, or present it in too ambitious a way, *e.g.*, "I shall prove in this sermon the doctrine of total depravity." "I shall explain in this discourse the apparent contradiction between the absolute sovereignty of God and the absolute freedom of man."

Neither should it be in a paradoxical form, which always carries with it something of a vain and egotistic air.

6. It should be varied. Let there be no stereotyped way of stating the subject. Sometimes it is well to keep the main proposition in the background, and at other times to let it be the first word uttered, the first thing announced. As a rare exception, there may be through the whole sermon no definite statement of the subject, but it may be left to be gathered by the hearer. As a rule, however, rarely to be departed from, there should be a clear and specific statement made of what one is intending to discuss.

In concluding this subject, the distinct warning should

be repeated, that the propositional form belongs almost exclusively to the didactic discourse, and should not, therefore, be invariably followed. It presupposes the synthetic method of treatment. It requires that a distinct topic should be drawn from the text, gathering up and combining all the ideas of the text in a definite form, and then that the sermon should be built, not upon the text, but upon the proposition. This has been our usual New England method of preaching, which has come down, in fact, from the earliest Protestant preachers; and it is not to be rashly or entirely given up, for it is admirably adapted to popular instruction; but, as has been often urged, a return to a simpler and more direct method of preaching from the Word of God, and not from a human proposition which is drawn from it, would be healthful. This would be also, historically speaking, the ancient method. We have already seen, in tracing the growth of the sermon, how long it was before a distinct theme (*Thema*) began to be developed from the text, and to form the immediate subject of address, and to tie it down to narrowly prescribed metes and bounds. The necessities of a later philosophic culture and of a more logical habit of thought, especially in Occidental lands, demanded and produced the propositional form of treating divine truth. Let us be careful, only, and not suffer this to become a yoke of bondage confining the free expression of truth.

#### SEC. 17. *The Division.*

The principle of division (Latin, *Distributio*; German, *Die Theile*) is a necessary and even beautiful one as applied to a discourse when, in the first place, it is not carried to an artificial extreme, and, in the second place, when there is matter worth dividing. It does not invent



the material for a sermon. It is not the original substance of thought, but if there be already rich thoughts it arranges and disposes them to the best advantage. It is sometimes, following the Latin term, called "The Disposition," especially by French and German writers on homiletics; but the term "Division" is a common one with us, though conveying a somewhat narrow conception of this not unimportant nor altogether unvital principle in sermonizing.

The fact of having formal divisions in a sermon, and the character of these divisions, is influenced, of course, by the kind of discussion which a subject may require or assume; since a certain prin- **The division influenced by the character of the sermon.** ciple of division is applicable to the peculiar character of the individual sermon. Thus, for example, the sermon may assume the logical form of discussion, which proceeds in a regular method of reasoning, by a series of connected propositions or divisions, each of which is true because the one that precedes it is true; and all of these tend to some general proposition or result. This form of discussion, it is evident, absolutely requires divisions. It needs a clear statement of the proofs, or, at least, of each successive part of the argument, and of the connections of these parts. It should resemble, in lucidness of division and statement, a problem of Euclid.

Where also the sermon is more natural and rhetorical, consisting mainly of a simple discussion of the text, and then of a series of inferences, or observations, drawn from the subject, expanding the theme into its various relations and applications, good divisions are necessary. Divisions here are the clear marking of each new observation, or thought, which, if not so marked might lead to tedious confusion.

This kind of discussion demands, perhaps, the more care in its divisional arrangement from its very facility and tendency to commonplace remark. F. W. Robertson's sermons abound in inferences ; but they generally come in after an argumentative discussion, when he introduces a number of distinct and interesting observations. He thus mingles the logical and inferential form of sermon, which is a good method. Having thoughtfully set forth a particular idea, he draws remarks from it, and then proceeds to another part of the subject. This is illustrated in his sermon on "The Star in the East," Second Series.

The contemplative sermon almost defies divisions, and scorns regular methods. It wanders "at its own sweet will." It is more liable to run into the essay style, and lose the form of direct address, than the logical or inferential modes ; and yet even a meditative discourse should be somewhat amenable to the laws of method.

The textual sermon, following closely the terms of the text, has and can have no very formal divisions. But still, each distinct point or idea of the text should be properly marked, else even a textual sermon becomes a tangled skein.

We thus see that regular divisions belong to the logical or argumentative style of sermon more fitly than to any other ; and yet, that all kinds of sermons demand something like "divisions," which clearly mark or set forth the different steps of the discourse.

How may the divisions of a sermon be defined ? They are simply the different parts in which the main subject is formally separated and discussed. They do not refer to the free and actual development of a subject so much as to the special points of view in which the theme is to be

**What are the  
divisions  
of a sermon ?**

held up and regarded. To make them requires a purely intellectual process, clearly discriminating, analyzing, and classifying thought. They give a rapid and condensed aspect of the whole subject in its constituent parts, and thus the better enable the hearer to follow the thread of the discourse, which the preacher is to hold in his hand. More than any other part they mark the *plan* of the sermon ; they are more important to the plan than is any other portion.

The utility of divisions. An ancient father of the Church said, " Shall the adversaries of the faith be able to state what is untrue with brevity, clearness, and plausibility ; while we give so poor an account of the truth that it makes people weary to listen to it, prevents them from gaining any insight into its real meaning, and leaves them disinclined to believe it ?"

The utility of  
divisions.

The utility of divisions is seen in the fact that—

1. They promote variety in unity. They do not promote mere variety, for while they seem to separate, they really bind together, in a flexible but strong chain, the whole discourse. The articulations and joints of the human body do not destroy its unity, but belong to one system, one organized life. Thus all the groups of ideas implied in divisions and subdivisions are referred to some common centre of life ; and they are not merely artificial divisions ; they have some good reason for them, bearing upon the true power of the sermon. A just classification of the various ideas or aspects of a subject implies some general law of unity which binds them vitally together.

2. They promote clearness. Fénélon has made an objection to the use of divisions, because, he says, they were derived originally from the schoolmen ; but even if they were thus derived, if, withal, they are valuable, there is no

reason why they should not be used. Natural divisions of a discourse are older than the schoolmen; they spring from the nature of things. Good divisions are nothing more than the clear analysis of any given theme of thought. They break it up into its component parts or specific ideas; and this analytic process, when not carried into hair-splitting, aids the clear understanding of the subject. It assists the hearer to follow the road which the discussion takes; and he cannot entirely lose his way, even if he should be for a time thrown out. It also prevents the sermon from becoming a mass of incoherent and confused matter.

3. They promote the progress of the discussion. Good divisions enable the writer to step easily from a lower to a higher level of the subject. They mark the logical as well as the natural advancement of thought, and prevent it from becoming retrogressive or rotary. They thus keep the sermon, or rather the preacher, from wasting his power; they enable every thought to have its due weight; they prevent repetition. Good divisions are, in fact, the result of clear thinking. They themselves often constitute intrinsically much of the beauty and power of the discourse. "Aptness to seize the principle of division, and to effect the division correctly and fully under it, perhaps more than any other specific capability, marks the degree of ability in the construction of a discourse."<sup>1</sup>

4. They refresh the mind and memory both of the speaker and hearer. They introduce breaks; they enable the mind to repose a moment, and take a view of the field, to recall what has gone before, to note the progress which has been made, and to look forward to what

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<sup>1</sup> Day's "Art of Discourse," p. 86.



is to come. The mind rests in the trench in which it is working its way up to the stronghold, looking both backward and forward. Divisions also tend to keep up the attention and interest in the hearer's mind, to prevent its weariness, and to assist in guiding its thought.

As to the number of divisions, the principle should be strongly laid down that there should be as few divisions as possible. Divisions tend to make a discourse stiff ; for the sermon should be a living growth from the text, a life rather than a work. All mechanical and artificial divi-

Number  
of  
divisions.

sions should therefore be avoided, nay, more, condemned. The number of divisions, however, is governed, as we have seen, very much by the nature of the subject itself. A very simple subject requires but few divisions. The more a subject will bear analyzing, of course the more of division, separation, and classification of ideas is needed. A difficult theological theme may sometimes require many divisions, and even subdivisions.

There should be no arbitrary number of divisions ; and, indeed, it is puerile to multiply divisions merely for the sake of doing so, and of giving a logical air to a sermon. This is not the way wise men talk. Different forms of stating the same thing do not demand different divisions. One should certainly never introduce a new division unless it is absolutely required in order to make the sense plainer, and to mark the progress of thought.

Claude says : " Division, in general, ought to be restrained to a small number of parts ; they should never exceed four or five at the most ; the most admired sermons have only two or three parts." He commends on the whole a twofold division ; in which this old writer on homiletics singularly agrees with the practice of one of the most accomplished of modern preachers, F. W. Robertson.

Dr. Eleazer Fitch thinks that, as a general rule, three principal divisions are enough for a sermon. He takes as a model for the sacred oration, the oration of Cicero, "*Pro Lege Manilia*," in which the orator has one design in a threefold division: "You must choose a general; you must choose an able general; you must choose Cneius Pompeius."

Divisions indeed should be rational and natural, and they are the best divisions which are clearest, briefest, and most easily retained. It is generally well to have the first main division theoretical and the second practical. Yet if the theme be fertile enough, there may be three, but rarely, almost never, more than three, *e.g.* (John 12:46-50), "The truth of Jesus a new revelation of God to the human mind."

(*a.*) Jesus, through his teaching, has given clearer light to the human mind than it had before.

(*b.*) Through his life and death he has made known the will of God more perfectly.

(*c.*) He therefore demands an implicit faith in him as the condition of the soul's salvation.

As to the pure philosophy of divisions, every logical subject may be said to be in its nature dichotonic, or two-fold—the thing and its opposite; every metaphysical theme to be trichotonic, containing the condition, that which it is conditioned upon, and the conception or idea which is developed from the union of the condition and its postulate. Tetrachotomy, or pentachotomy, or polychotomy, are therefore opposed to a strictly philosophical method, both in relation to the substance of the proposition and the reason and design of the division.

As to the sources and qualities of divisions, there can be, in fact, no very definite, or rather rigid rules laid down, be-

cause these divisional qualities depend so entirely upon the nature and fruitfulness of the subject. Before, however, entering upon this topic, we would call attention (this being a good place to do so) to the interesting view of a German writer respecting the distinction to be made between the subjective idea of a theme and its objective and practical preaching sense ; and the divisional principle should base itself (he thinks) upon the latter rather than upon the former, although the former should be grasped. Thus, take the subject of " Prayer ;" here the subjective idea is the nature or philosophy of prayer, but the preaching idea is the power or the blessedness of prayer. This may be spoken of :

Sources and  
qualities  
of divisions.

(1.) As to the blessedness of the prayer of praise.

(2.) The blessedness of the prayer of actual petition for what is needed.

(3.) The blessedness of the prayer of thanksgiving.

The following would be an instance of a subjective treatment of a text :

Matt. 6 : 34, " Take no care for the morrow."

Subject : " Limitation of our care for the future." This forbidden care concerns itself :

(1.) With incidental events of life.

(2.) With unavoidable necessities of the future.

(3.) With new duties which the future may bring with it.

This plan, an interesting one, dwells upon the nature of this care, or the care which is forbidden ; upon the instances where it is forbidden ; whereas the more practical and preaching-idea of the text would be, " The reasons for avoiding anxious care for the future ;" not the care itself so much as the avoiding of the care, and thus following out the Saviour's positive direction.

We would say of this fine and thoroughly German distinction, that, while there is force in it, and while preachers should, as a general rule, preach objectively, yet preaching sometimes gains in depth and richness by employing the subjective method. Where, especially, the subjectiveness is in the divine idea, and not in the human idea, or consciousness, which is usually a weakening method of preaching, then the sermon is really deepened. It loses something of the apparent element of practicality, but gains in the actual knowledge and teaching of divine things.

1. Divisions should correspond to the nature and design of the subject. These determine the character of divisions, and therefore to make them uniform and rigid would be to destroy the free development of thought. This rule forbids all stereotyped character of divisions. "The best practical rule for a preacher would seem to be, not to tie himself to any uniform method at all. Many men have many minds, and many subjects require different modes of discussion. As a rule, we strongly incline to some form of announced division. It may be set forth either in a continuous sentence, or by the more strongly marked numerical breaks, according as the nature of the subject may require ; but it should always be with sufficient distinctness for the hearer to understand the general drift of the argument, what is the lesson to be enforced, or what is the truth which is to be proved. In the case of the extemporaneous speaker, especially, a well staked-out course of thought, with definite halting-places, seems almost indispensable. Unpremeditated forms of illustration may suggest themselves, in the course of preaching, which it were a bondage not to yield to. Yet he must not suffer them to carry him too far away ; and the taking up of one of these



announced heads both facilitates and indicates his coming back." <sup>1</sup>

The preacher should guard against two extremes, of a pedantic mannerism, running all sermons into one plan, and of a too vaguely announced plan, or what may be called "the flowing or faintly indicated announcement." In the last, which is the modern tendency, the preacher may get half through his sermon before the *quorsum tendit* is discovered.

2. Divisions should be made to comprehend or exhaust the contents of the main proposition. This has regard to the relations of the division with the theme. This is the law of completeness in divisions; and as to the main divisions of the discourse, it is absolutely essential. Divisions are to the proposition what the proposition is to the text. As the proposition aims to exhaust the text, divisions aim to take up into them the whole meaning and contents of the proposition, and to unfold the whole substance of the thought comprehended in it. Limit the proposition itself, rather than have it overrun the divisions. Divisions may, indeed, sometimes comprise the proposition itself, presenting it in different fragments or parts, which together form the general theme. Thus one of Nettleton's sermons—subject, 1. The departing prodigal; 2. The returning prodigal; without any other general proposition.

3. Divisions should be governed by a law of unity which requires that each division suggest or bear vital relation to the proposition. This also has regard to the relations of the division with the theme.

There can be no true theme which does not comprise one generic truth, or one class of truths, so that

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<sup>1</sup> Moore's "Thoughts on Preaching," p. 108.

all its subordinate parts are but specific divisions of one general truth, and bear common relations to it. "The theme in division is ever a class; and its parts are denoted by the terms species, varieties, individuals."<sup>1</sup> This subject, or theme, is, of course, made up of its own various attributes, bound together by a common law of identity; and in division, this common principle of the relation of the specific parts to the generic whole should be strictly observed. No other principle of division should be introduced, thus causing confusion of ideas; and only those divisions which belong to this single class of ideas set forth in the theme should be introduced. No new classification of ideas should arise under a proposition which suggests one specific class of ideas, or one peculiar kind of attributes. To speak more generally, the one comprehensive and characteristic thought of the proposition should be reproduced in all the divisions, and every division should bear a necessary and living relation to this one thought, although the particular points treated of in each division may be quite dissimilar as regards each other. And the division may not always distinctly express the matter of the proposition, but may only suggest it; yet it should promote the general result, and the great moral truth or idea of the proposition should run through every division. It should be seen that there is but one bearing to all parts. The subordinate parts should not efface the principal part, but all the divisions should be such as will conduce to the carrying out of the principal idea.

4. One division should not anticipate or include the succeeding one. This, and the remaining qualities of divisions which we shall notice, have regard to the re-

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<sup>1</sup> Day's "Art of Discourse," p. 89.

lations of divisions among themselves. The distinction which separates into subdivisions should be real ; and that which enters into one idea, or forms part of it, should not be made the theme of a separate division. Ideas which have a very near relation to each other should not form distinct divisions. There should be no blending or confounding of subordinate parts. If a new part, division, or thought is introduced, it should be something really new and distinct ; for nothing weakens a discourse so much as confusion and repetition of ideas.

The error may be sometimes the other way, and ideas may be produced in divisions which are absolutely novel, strikingly incongruous, and entirely trivial, as in a " Long Vacation" sermon preached by an Oxford University preacher on the character of Abraham :

(1.) As a patriarch.

(2.) As the father of the faithful.

(3.) As a country gentleman.<sup>1</sup>

5. Divisions should prepare the way for something to come. There should be progress in them. Yet, while they look forward to something more to come, they should not anticipate results, which are reserved for the development of the sermon, and especially for the conclusion. They should not hinder or break the continuous and free movement of the discourse ; they should rather aid it.

6. Divisions belonging to the same class should be similar to each other in form. This gives a neat finish to the sermon, and promotes unity.

In regard to the composition of divisions, which is simply the art of bringing into one view the several elements of a given subject, **Composition of divisions.** or separating it into its component parts, we may, in order to obtain just divisions of our theme--

<sup>1</sup> Cox's " Recollections of Oxford," p. 225.

1. Divide the whole general subject or proposition into two or several particular propositions. These may be distinct, but true parts of one theme.

2. Separate the genus into its different species. The truths of Scripture are usually given in a generic form, and they are thus capable of almost endless specification and illustration.

3. View the truth in its various appropriate relations or bearings to other truths. One may be obliged to do this in order to eliminate the particular truth in hand, and make it stand out clear in its own proper place in the field of relative truth.

4. Marshal and discuss the principal proofs or arguments of the theme in hand. A truth of Scripture stands on its own ground of inspired authority ; but even this may be strengthened and confirmed by reasoning.

5. Exhibit the grand motives of any given duty, or proposition including such duty.

6. Illustrate the fact or duty involved in the subject in various practical ways and observations ; or, in brief, divisions may proceed by *Classification, Analysis, Relations, Proofs, Motives, and Illustration*.<sup>1</sup>

A word might be said here before leaving this point of the composition of divisions, upon the artificial system of "Topics" which comes down from the schoolmen, and which, though so artificial, is still worth regarding for a moment. This system might indeed, like an old-fashioned fire-arm, still prove valuable if nothing better were at hand ; but it is artificial, mechanical, and

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<sup>1</sup> The sources of divisions, according to rhetoricians, are manifold. One writer, for example, states sixteen of them. We would refer the reader, for different kinds of divisions which may be employed, especially in the textual sermon, and which are useful for reference in composing a sermon, to Kidder's "Homiletics," p. 201.



not to be depended upon. A few of these stereotyped "topics," or topical divisions, are the following, which may give some idea of their nature.

Thus, subjects may be treated according,

- (1.) To their origin ;
- (2.) Their nature ;
- (3.) Their effects.

They may also be looked at,

- (1.) As to qualities ;
- (2.) As to obligations.

We may again view,

- (1.) The doctrine, or what is to be believed ;
- (2.) The practice to be derived from it.

We may still again treat,

- (1.) The theory ;
- (2.) The life ;

or,

- (1.) The possibility ;
- (2.) The reality ;
- (3.) The necessity ;

or,

- (1.) The past ;
- (2.) The present ;
- (3.) The future ;

or,

- (1.) The beginning ;
- (2.) The progress ;
- (3.) The end.

We may consider the relations of a subject,

- (1.) To God ;
- (2.) To ourselves ;
- (3.) To other men ;

or,

- (1.) As a thought ;

(2.) As a word ;

(3.) As a work ;

or,

(1.) The general ;

(2.) The particular ;

or,

(1.) The State ;

(2.) The Church ;

(3.) The household ;

or,

(1.) Man in his nature ;

(2.) Man as a member of society ;

(3.) Man as a member of the Christian Church.

Let us now consider the order and arrangement of divisions. The general principle which should guide in this is, that divisions should proceed according to the necessity of the subject, or the law of arrangement which a particular subject contains within itself when evolved by thought ; or, more specifically, (1.) By an order of logical necessity, as the discussion of the nature of the subject, and then of its circumstances and proofs, or of its what, how, and why. (2.) By an order of inherent dignity or value of ideas. This may be called the natural order. (3.) By an order of time ; *e.g.*, reason, Scripture, experience, would be generally the best order, because Scripture includes reason, and experience, reason and Scripture. The order of cause and effect would come under this principle. (4.) Order of progressive strength of argument. We should advance from the weaker to the stronger argument ; or, one may begin with the strong and end with the strong, putting the weaker arguments in the middle. (5.) Order of progress from the abstract to the concrete—from *a priori* to *a posteriori*

—from arbitrary ideas to the realized consciousness of these in fact and experience. (6.) Order of personal interest. Those thoughts and facts which most nearly concern our hearers themselves come with more force last—God, the Church, yourselves. One should so arrange his divisions as to secure progressive interest and moral impression; he should bear down on the individual conscience and heart.

As was said of the proposition, each division should be plain and perspicuous; should be clearly cut; should give complete sense by itself; should not be too commonplace or easy; and it should be so announced as best to promote the clear progress of the discussion, and its remembrance by the audience.

As to the utility of numbering divisions, and of announcing numerical divisions, the tendency is certainly, at the present time, not to announce divisions numerically. But if it were not a **Numbering divisions.** paradox to say so, we think a numerical division is useful when it is needed; that is, when it makes more plain the discussion of a truth. If a sermon is to hide thought, or to amuse an audience, then, by all means, omit the formality of numbers; yet if divisions are useful at all, it may be sometimes useful to number them, and the subject itself may demand it. But the numbering impairs freedom, and imparts a formal character to a discourse; therefore we think it best never to number divisions, or, what is the same thing, actually to announce the number of divisions, unless numbers are absolutely needed to make the discourse more memorable and useful; for, as says Quintilian, "division diminishes the appearance of strength."<sup>1</sup> Erasmus speaks of

<sup>1</sup> "Institutes," B. ii. c. 12, s. 3.

too many divisions as an unmanageable crowd, *vitanda est semper partium turba*. Fénelon also is greatly opposed to many, and to previously announced divisions. He says they break the continuity of thought. A sermon hampered by these restrictions, he declares, is not a beautifully well-veined marble, but a stiff mosaic. Let us therefore look upon formal numerical divisions as a disagreeable necessity, to be avoided as often as possible, not looking upon them as the old Puritan preachers did, as an essential beauty. "One Mr. Lye, a minister of the seventeenth century, in a sermon on 1 Cor. 6 : 17, first explains the text in thirteen divisions for fixing it on the right basis ; and then subjoins fifty-six additional topics. Another writer of the same period, a Mr. Drake, published a sermon of one hundred and seventy-six divisions, to which are appended sundry queries and solutions ; the preacher telling us at the end that many important particulars are passed over because he wished to limit himself to the marrow and substance !" <sup>1</sup>

Those times are passed. Men have less patience than formerly for such minute elaboration of truth, such scholastic dissecting and logic-chopping. Sermons, without losing their thoughtful method, must become like other natural rapid addresses, in fact like earnest conversation. The more intelligent the audience the less necessity of formal numerical announcement of divisions at all ; but where divisions are absolutely essential for the solid mechanism or clear plan of a discourse, they should be distinctly made, yet in a workman-like way, and the jointures should be concealed as neatly as possible, as nature conceals them. The law of easy transition should be observed.

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<sup>1</sup> Moore's " Thoughts on Preaching," p. 105.



As to the place, or time, of announcing divisions, this may be either before the discussion, during its progress, or at its close. The last was frequently Luther's mode. Generally speaking, it is best to announce divisions at the beginning, especially if the sermon is of a topical character. While a cultivated taste would prefer never formally to announce divisions, utility is to be placed before taste in sermonizing.

Place  
or time of  
announcing  
divisions.

To sum up this whole matter we would say that "Division" is simply breaking up a subject into its constituent parts. It is exactly the opposite of "generalization." It shows what belongs to a subject by bringing into distinct view its several elements.

It resolves the general into the individual. Divisions from a common centre trace differences outward.

To do this happily one should be familiar with logic, though in a sermon the oratorical method is often preferable to the logical; but logic is at the basis of oratory.

By neglecting the study of divisional arrangement one is apt to produce what Paley calls "a bewildered rhapsody without aim or effect, order or conclusion." Good divisional arrangement gives to a sermon what painters call "tone." The sermon which usually makes the most impression is that which makes its points clear.

In extemporaneous preaching it is chiefly order which aids the memory, and lends force to the discourse.

Announcing divisions is simply a question of rhetorical propriety, but we should not hesitate to do this if it will aid impressiveness and clearness. If we err it is better to do so on the side of plainness than of confusion.

SEC. 18. *The Development.*

The development (*Die Entwicklung*) of a sermon is the whole body of it as related severally to the text, the subject, the proposition, and the divisions which serve the purpose of originating, marking, and limiting the development.

The development, in other words, is the carrying out and the filling up of the whole plan, even as the divisions are the carrying out of the proposition, and the proposition of the text. It is the actual treatment of the theme in hand, the free and living current of thought, sentiment, and remark, after the definite subject and the general outline of treatment have been designated. The word "body," having in it the vital organism and all that goes to make up the living whole of the discourse, expresses what is meant by the development better than any other word.

The general character of the development of a discourse is decided chiefly by the character of the subject, although the object, or the main purpose we have in view, has also great influence. One  
 What decides the development of the discourse. author indeed says, "The object far more than the subject determines the natural order of our discourse. If our object is to convince, we must naturally seek the most regular way of advancing proof; if to impress, we must follow the course of human feelings. Should we wish to make comparisons, we must enumerate all the parts of argument. Would we narrate, our clue then is the succession of events. Thus then, each has its peculiarity, and the only art is to get at the true nature of the matter in hand."<sup>1</sup> There may also be different modes of

<sup>1</sup> "Manse of Mastland."

development of the same text according to our object ; we may treat it in a logical or a popular way, a textual or a topical method. But the subject, nevertheless, as we should naturally suppose, determines its own method of treatment and exerts, therefore, the chief influence upon the development of the theme in hand.

There are many methods of development laid down by different authors ; thus Moore treats of the development of a sermon by amplification, or the expansion of the leading thought of the text ; by implication ; by observation ; by confirmation ; by argumentation ; and by investigation.<sup>1</sup>

**Various  
methods of  
development.**

In order not to enter into unnecessary and confusing detail here, we will confine ourselves to the more common nomenclature, and will say a few words on five principal modes of discussion or development : the Expository ; the Illustrative ; the Argumentative ; the Persuasive ; and the Meditative.

1. Expository development. If indeed one of the great aims of preaching is to instruct or edify the people in scriptural truth, then expository preaching, in bringing before the people a large amount of truth and a wide scope of scriptural knowledge, and in compelling the preacher himself to study the Scriptures comprehensively, is one of the most valuable kinds of sermonizing, if not the most valuable. Expository preaching ends in making a passage of Scripture plain to the hearer's mind and heart, *i.e.*, not only in making the ancient truth clear, but in bringing it into the living present, in drawing out its varied lessons to the soul. It is not simple exposition, but it is the ex-

**Expository  
development.**

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<sup>1</sup> " Thoughts on Preaching," pp. 96-99.

pository sermon, or the real use and adaptation of the truth that has formed the subject of exegesis.

Expository sermons may be of two kinds :

(*a.*) A simple exposition of the several clauses of a passage of Scripture in their order. This is useful when the portion of Scripture is fragmentary, and affords no very continuous thread of argument, and also when there are difficulties and ambiguities in the text to be critically explained. Such sermons may embrace the exposition of a single passage of Scripture, or of a whole book of Scripture in the exact order of passages. In such a sermon the lesson or the application generally follows the exegesis of each passage, in the order in which it occurs. This kind of discourse is more truly a simple exegetical lecture or running commentary than a finished sermon ; yet it was the method of Chrysostom and Augustine, and of the early preachers.

(*b.*) The setting forth, after the exposition, of the whole, of the definite truth or truths which the passage thus explained conveys, especially in the way of practical observations and lessons. This comes nearer than the other mode to the topical form of discourse, but it requires a lengthened exposition, which really forms the body of the sermon. Chalmers's lectures on the Epistle to the Romans are fine examples of this kind of expository preaching ; he shows the connections of thought between many detached passages, and develops their truth in more general practical propositions. This mingling of the textual and topical styles is perhaps the most profitable and instructive method of preaching, as well as the most popular and interesting. Were it more generally adopted, it would infuse a new life into our sermons.



Some preachers fail to make expository preaching interesting by their extremely dry and barren manner of treating the Scriptures. They bring their exegetical process, instead of its results, into the pulpit.

**Reasons of failure in expository preaching.**

"In this kind of preaching you should take up your subjects, and treat them in a free, popular manner, and never exegetically, as in the schools. In your private study, and for your own benefit, cut and trim an exegesis as much as you will ; but never think of carrying your pruning knife and grafting tools into the desk with you ; or, if you do, keep them out of sight. Common minds love to see good work when it is done, but they dislike the labor of doing it themselves, and the tedium of standing by to see how others do it."<sup>1</sup>

Other preachers fail in expository preaching because they have no skill in grasping and grouping ideas, and the sermon has no unity as a work of art, and more than all, it leaves no definite impression. It is but a stringing together of short explanations, without recognizing the deeper connections of parts, the law of combination, the hidden root of doctrine.

But the reason why preachers most commonly fail in expository preaching is, that they do not put study enough into it ; they do not give close thought to the exegesis of the passage, to make it full and rich. They think they can "get up" an expository sermon in a short time ; whereas that method, above all, requires original investigation, and, perhaps, more close and searching study than any other, for in it there is less left to invention.

True expository preaching is, as we have said, profit-

<sup>1</sup> "New Englander," Jan. 1866.

able to the preacher himself, because it enriches his scriptural knowledge, and leads him deep into the word of God. It gives him broad views of revealed truth, it teaches him to read the sacred writings in a connected way, and it follows out an inspired train of thought or argument sometimes through a whole book. It prevents him, also, from misapplying and misusing individual texts, by taking them out of their right relations. It lends variety to preaching, and does not shut it up to a few doctrinal subjects; it ranges through the broad fields of the word, and goes from theme to theme, as the stream of revelation flows on through the varied regions of divine truth. Expository preaching may lose its interest by being made too formal, by becoming too orderly and topical, by drawing out the truths of a passage into propositions too distinct and rigid; whereas the mind of the preacher should hover around the passage, should recur to it again and again, should (as has been said) suck the sweetness from it like a bee; should, in ever nearer and more penetrating ways, draw out its life and exhaust its deep and precious meaning. Exhaust, did we say? That would be impossible; for, after all the preaching, how much there is still in the divine word which is fresh, unexplored, and almost entirely unknown! Expository preaching also suggests numberless subjects for sermons. It gives an opportunity to remark upon a great many themes on which one would not desire to preach a whole sermon, and it also gives an opportunity sometimes to administer salutary reproof in an indirect way. It is, in fact, the most free and practical method of preaching; it comes home to the heart the quickest. It is, above all, feeding the people with the "bread of life," with real biblical nutriment, with that spiritual food which all souls need, and which this age and every age requires. There

is also in it less of the exclusively human element than in topical preaching ; the Holy Spirit seems to suggest and to provide the materials for the sermon. It is, therefore, a good change from the logical method, where the form often tyrannizes over the substance ; and a mingling of the two methods of topical and expository preaching will serve to correct the false tendencies of both. Dr. John M. Mason's remarks may be quoted on this point, though they should be received with some reservation. He says, " Do not choose a man who always preaches upon insulated texts. I care not how powerful or eloquent he may be in handling them. The effect of his power and eloquence will be, to banish a taste for the Word of God, and to substitute the preacher in its place. You have been accustomed to hear that word preached to you in its connection. Never permit that practice to drop. Foreign churches call it *lecturing* ; and when done with discretion, I can assure you that, while it is of all exercises the most difficult for the preacher, it is, in the same proportion, the most profitable for you. It has this peculiar advantage, that in going through a book of Scripture, it spreads out before you all sorts of character, and all forms of opinion, and gives the preacher an opportunity of striking every kind of evil and of error, without subjecting himself to the invidious suspicion of aiming his discourses at individuals." <sup>1</sup>

2. Illustrative development. Under this form come, (1.) The historical sermon ; (2.) The biographical ; (3.) The descriptive ; (4.) Those discourses which are mainly formed upon natural, scientific, or even symbolical and figurative illustration ; (5.) Allegorical.

**Illustrative  
development.**

<sup>1</sup> See Stanley's " Life of Dr. Arnold," on his method of " Exegetical Preaching" (Scribner's edition), v. i. p. 194, seq.

The historical sermon has reference to the illustration of truth by the proof and evolution of facts, rather than of words or ideas.

The  
historical  
sermon.

As the Bible is pre-eminently a book of facts, and has a noble historical development in itself, this may form a legitimate and interesting mode of preaching, as it was, indeed, the method of the apostles. As all men love to see truth in living forms, they will listen with interest to lessons drawn from sacred history and biography, which is, indeed, the rich residuum of the deepest experience of the race. The great features and facts of Paul's life, in connection with the old religions and civilizations of the age in which he lived, cannot fail to arrest attention, and lead to nobler and higher thought. We are not to become simply historians in the pulpit, but to set forth and impress the higher truth through the living lessons of history, of all history, not only that of the Bible times and personages, but of man, and of the Church in all ages—of the great facts and events of modern days bearing upon the spiritual welfare of man and the interests of Christ's kingdom in the earth. Protestant preaching has doubtless lost something here ; and, in this respect, we may learn a lesson from the Roman Catholics ; they choose, as themes for illustrative preaching, the times and examples of eminent Christians, both ancient and modern.

This kind of preaching has its own mode of developing a subject, and allows of a more discursive and generalizing method. It permits a freer use of the imagination, where it does not transcend the bounds of truth. It permits the drawing of various, and sometimes unaccustomed, remarks and lessons from the facts evolved—lessons often of a homely, personal, and direct kind. It



has been said that "Demosthenes' arguments were Demosthenes' facts;" and so the argument of every sermon should rest solidly on facts.

This species of sermon has already been spoken of under the topic of the interpretation and handling of texts.

Biographical sermons, applying the scriptural axiom that "as face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man," are, if well composed, of great didactic value, and give opportunity for dramatic impression bearing forcibly upon the conscience. It is truth run into living forms. The "Ædipus Tyrannus" and the "Antigone" have had more of moulding influence upon the moral character of men and nations than have Aristotle's "Ethics."

**Biographical  
sermons.**

Descriptive preaching should not be too frequently used, but if a man have power in word-painting he can find good use for it in the pulpit.

But illustrative preaching is, naturally, chiefly preaching by illustrations; and we would speak a word more especially of the use of illustrations in preaching. The judicious use of illustrations is to be highly commended.

**Use of  
illustrations  
in preaching.**

When Christ pointed to the lilies of the field by way of interpreting moral and spiritual truth, he opened the volume of the visible world to the preacher, as a revelation of God full of spiritual types. In like manner the Psalms, and especially the book of Job, are drawn from the evidences of the divine working in and through living things. They teach from the known to the unknown, from the visible to the invisible.

The true preacher is shown in his ability to body forth spiritual ideas in forms that may, as it were, be seen and handled. This is to take truth out of its hidden rela-

tions and make it distinctly seen by the most simple mind. This is putting the abstract into the concrete, which is the form of life. If the illustrations are fresh and vivid they light up a sermon, and aid both its interest and comprehension. Illustrations should be—

(a.) Real, *i.e.*, true to fact, and true to things that do exist or might exist. They should not relate to things that are unreal and fanciful.

(b.) Common, or suggested by objects that lie, as it were, in one's pathway, at home with him, or about him ; picked up when he walks through the streets and over the fields, or as he mingles in the common business and occupations of life. While there may and should be true poetry in preaching, yet illustrations should not be merely poetical or beautiful, drawn simply from the imagination, or even from the imagined history of the past, but rather from actual things in life, so that they form in themselves analogues and arguments. An illustration from the last war in America is better than one from the Punic wars. An illustration from a blacksmith's shop, or a carpenter's bench, is better than one from Vulcan's smithy or the realms of cloud-land. All life and fact, and the thousand forms and events of real being and action, are open to the preacher of truth. Everything real should become a winged vehicle of truth. The old preachers and prophets possessed this faculty of perceiving the spiritual sense in the homeliest and most natural things. From Isaiah to John Bunyan this has been the special prophetic or preaching gift.

(c.) Drawn from Nature itself. Nature becomes an organ for the preacher of truth to play upon ; and he who penetrates into this symbolism of Nature has a deeper insight into spiritual things than the merely prosaic reasoner.

Illustrations thus true, fresh, homely, natural, forcible, form an element of preaching that may be called its *vital expression*, and which is, after all, nothing more nor less than stating truth itself in such real forms that it comes home to the mind with living power, and delights and fastens it as with a nail. Old truths are brought out in new lights. Abstruse subjects become picturesque. The most metaphysical discussion beats with the life-blood of the present. There is to be found divine instruction in everything. The elements of common sense, truth, reasonableness, shrewdness, wit, and sagacity, skill, sympathy, and humanity, are in such preaching. It is no longer dry and technical but is full of nature and the human element. We should assuredly cultivate this "nature-preaching," as the Germans call it, this power of homely illustration that causes the present actual to throw light on the past actual, that interests men and makes the people a part with yourself, that strikes the real current of their thinking, that speaks as if speaking out of their own thought. Mr. Spurgeon has this popular illustrative power. Dr. Bushnell had it in a more lofty and ideal use of Nature. Savonarola, Wyclif, Latimer, Luther, Chrysostom had it; the apostle Paul made use of it; and above all, our Lord himself.

Allegorical preaching is hardly fitted to the Occidental taste, though much practised in Europe during the Middle Ages, and later still in England. It has in the past, as we have seen, led to great abuses and puerilities; but of our Saviour it is said, that

**Allegorical  
preaching.**

"without a parable spake he not unto them." Truth was indeed too precious a jewel to be presented pure and simple to an unbelieving age. So it may sometimes be now. This was the method of John George Hamann, the German apologist for Christian faith in the times of

the height of German neological scepticism. In a grotesque view of this fact the author of "Sartor Resartus" wrote his obscure enigmas and taught righteousness in ironical allegory.

3. Argumentative development. This is to convince the judgment by bringing out and establishing the truth through proof and evidence. Thus in the text "By grace ye are saved," the argumentative development would reason upon and show the truth of this ; while the expository development would simply set forth the scriptural account of the method of salvation by grace, and the illustrative development would exemplify it. All subjects are not fitted for the argumentative development, although, perhaps, reasoning may be applied to any subject which admits of being true or false ; but doctrinal subjects—those which contain scriptural teaching, that may be confirmed by reasons and proofs—are the chief subjects for argumentative development.

This method also has its advantages ; indeed many writers, among them Dr. Fitch, prescribe it as the best and invariable method of sermonizing. Argument impresses truth already believed, and convinces of truth not before believed. An enlightened faith rests on proper grounds of evidence, either external or internal, and the more fully these grounds are set forth, the more firmly established will be the faith.

Argument is also often useful in arousing the feelings. The mind becomes interested in a truth which is capable of clear proof, and it is overcome by the spiritual weapons of reason and truth. The most successful preachers, as instruments of producing immediate conversion, the most successful revival preachers, are often at first severely argumentative, thereby gaining power to bear



down forcibly upon the conscience and heart. The argumentative style of sermon is so common with us in New England that we usually speak of the "body" or "development" of the discourse as "the argument."

The argumentative development of a sermon is of two kinds: the indirect and the direct. 1. The indirect. Under this comes, (*a.*) The refutation of **The indirect** objections. This should generally be in the **argument**. first part of the body of a discourse, because the last words should be the strongest, and should leave a positive impression. When the objections are trivial, they need not be noticed; but when they are real, and present truly intellectual difficulties, it is best to discuss them one by one. Refutation removes the obstacles and clears away the rubbish, before we begin to build the argument. And there is nothing like grappling with an antagonist to excite interest, for man naturally loves fighting, and almost every one is more forcible in refuting than in proving. But the preaching should not stop at the refutation; for Christianity is not a negative system—it is full of reasons.

In refutation, good sense dictates that we should be careful to be candid, since in this way we gain the confidence of our hearers when we proceed to the proof. We may gain an advantage, sometimes, in turning an objection into a proof; we thus carry the war into Africa. But no trifling objections should be stated. No time should be spent in demolishing men of straw. And above all things, acrimony in refuting opposing arguments should be avoided. (*b.*) The hypothetical form of argument. This is another form of indirect argument. It consists in bringing up several different forms of suppositions, beginning with the least plausible; and, by discussing and disproving these in succession, you lay the way for the one

which you wish to establish. Thus the doctrine of human sinfulness may be proved by gradually annihilating the various hypotheses of human goodness which men adduce for their own escape from this humbling and consuming truth, and by leaving it as the only possible truth. (c.) The serial or gradual argument. This form of indirect argument begins with some distinct and common truth, that is readily conceded by your hearer, and then comes up by making the predicate of one proved truth the subject of another, until what you wish specially to prove presents itself in an irresistible form, as a

**The direct** foregone conclusion. 2. The direct method  
**argument.** of argument. This consists in the adducing of direct and positive proof. The subjects of pulpit discourse are commonly those which come under the general department of moral evidence. This permits, and even requires, proof. Proof is that mental act or process by which we arrive at certainty or something like certainty, in our judgments respecting truth; and when the argument relates strictly to truth, or to fact, the proofs are called reasons; when it is concerning right, or duty, they are called motives. Argument deals chiefly with the first, or with reasons.

As to the sources of proof, they are commonly divided into two classes, mediate and immediate. 1. The imme-

**Sources of** mediate are those which spring from, (a.) Con-  
**proof.** sciousness, or that which appeals to the internal sense of right in the mere statement of a truth. (b.) Perception, or that which is the object of our own observation as regards cause and effect—as, poison kills. (c.) Testimony, or the related perceptions of others—in fact, a common and universal perception. (d.) Intuition, which pertains to the apprehension of abstract truths—as purely mathematical and rational

truths that are the objects of spontaneous belief, because the reasons for them exist in the mind itself.

Dr. Fitch would add to these Common Sense, which is a kind of induction from general grounds of human thought and observation. 2. The mediate sources of proof are those which are founded upon the principle that all truth is one, and that its various parts have essential relations to each other. This admits of reasoning from what is known to what is unknown—from what is established to what is to be established ; in a word, if such and such things are true, other things must be true : it is the usual method of deductive reasoning.

We would make two or three suggestions in relation to the strictly argumentative development of a discourse :

(1.) In taking an argumentative position one should be sure that it is a strong one. **Suggestions in relation to argumentative development.** The premise taken in the beginning should be thoughtfully taken ; and the truth you seek to establish should be fairly reasoned out, or be capable of being reasoned out, and not be a mere assumption.

(2.) In the arrangement of an argument one should exercise great judiciousness and care. One should observe the two great principles of attending to the force of probability that unites the proof to the conclusion, and to the right connection among the arguments themselves.

Without entering into all the rules upon the method and order of argumentative preaching, we would just notice the common argument from the Scriptures. As a general rule, when the direct testimony of Scripture forms a part in a series of arguments, it should occupy the first place. If the series relates to God, it should always be first—*e.g.*, “ the veracity of God ;” the natural and true order would be, 1. His own word as to his

veracity. 2. His conduct as showing this. But in speaking of man we should sometimes take this testimony of God last, since he is omniscient and infallible. If we speak to unbelievers, we may adduce Scripture first, and then the proofs from reason, which are stronger in their minds ; but when we speak directly to Christians, the Scripture proof should be used last. They may distrust your reasoning, but they will bow to the Scriptures while still the reasoning may be useful in confirming the truth.

(3.) The discourse should rarely or never be exclusively argumentative. Thought should not lose its life by going through a strictly dialectic process. The sermon is not, after all, a proposition of Euclid. No part of it should be entirely disconnected from the will, the feelings, and the experience of men. It should not become a matter of pure intellect. The preacher may in this way conquer, but he will not convince nor convert.

To this suggestion that the sermon itself should rarely be wholly or exclusively argumentative, might be added, that the general style of preaching should not be wholly argumentative.

We want, often, simpler practical sermons—sermons that do not discuss, but only earnestly express, religious truth and feeling ; sermons that spring from the heart more than the head ; sermons, too, that have a more attractive literary form where the imagination plays freely ; sermons that cast aside the stiff robes of argumentation, and are unbound, spontaneous, spiritual. The preacher of an argumentative cast of mind should especially guard against the temptation of this tendency, and should cultivate freer forms of discourse ; and so, on the other hand, the illogical and sensational preacher should cultivate a severer, solider style, just as we give mathematics to a dreamer to make him think. As the argumentative



method implies the predominance of the human over the divine element in preaching, a more cautious use of it, and a return to a simpler, less ambitious, and more spiritual manner of preaching are to be commended.

(4.) The argument should not be too high or abstruse for the audience. It may be very close and powerful, but it should ground itself in human nature, or in the common laws, truths, and motives of the human mind, which all men appreciate and understand. It has been said that "the foundations of argument in the pulpit must, to a great extent, be commonplace."

4. Persuasive development. This, too, is a kind of argumentative discussion for the purpose of conviction, but it deals chiefly with *motives*, rather than proofs or reasons. It does not end with mere conviction, but rather with persuasion. Persuasive development.

It addresses the will with motives of good, urging it to the performance of immediate duty. If the will of the hearer is opposed to the truth, the aim is to remove the will from its present object of choice, and to fix it upon another and true object; if the will is apathetic or indifferent, the aim is to awaken it to action and choice; if the will is favorable, the aim is to encourage and strengthen this good purpose. This method of development partakes somewhat of the *hortatory* style of sermon, being addressed to the feelings as well as the reason. It requires something more than proof, since a man may be convinced by proof; but he must be persuaded to act and choose by motives. Few preachers can afford to leave out the persuasive element. One great end of preaching, as we have said, if not the great end, is persuasion; it is not mere instruction, but persuasion; it is to persuade men to love and obey God.

Not only the confessedly hortatory sermon, but every

sermon should have in it the element of persuasion, should tend to this end. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Cold, intellectual, argumentative, passionless preaching, without a thought steeped in the heart, or an appeal warmed in the emotions, has no precedent in apostolic preaching.

Knowing the terrors of the Lord, the apostle persuaded men. Above all, the love of Christ constrained him in preaching the gospel to others. We must move men to act, we must persuade them to obey the word of the Lord. We must bring them to a choice.

But there must be some ultimate ground of choice, or there could be no object or ground of persuasion. Choice implies the existence of an alternative. Now, it is the object of persuasive reasoning to show others the true reasons and motives of choice, that, these being fully set before the mind, and deliberately weighed, the mind may be led to make the good choice. The end of all persuasion is to show that the greatest good lies on the side of duty, and thus to lead men to do what is right. The obvious means to this are, presenting inducements, considerations, motives; for that which moves a man to do anything is a motive. Of course the preacher of righteousness can deal only with good and true motives. What, then, are the sources of persuasion?

Vinet reduces all motives which the preacher can employ to two—goodness and happiness—in fact to happiness.

As all human action aims at some good, in presenting the motive of happiness, one should be careful to present the supreme aim or the high and true idea of happiness, ending in the blessedness of the Christian; he should show that goodness and happiness are necessarily and finally united, are

**The sources  
of persuasion.**

really one, and that the old stoic axiom, "To be conscious of virtue is happiness," is realized in an infinitely higher sense in the Christian life. There is even a true self-love which may be justly appealed to. In fact, the tastes, desires, sympathies, and affections of our nature—all that powerful side of our nature—are not to be lost sight of, since it is not mere reason that moves men to act; it is also feeling, desire, affection.

Nothing is more wonderfully adapted to move our deepest feelings than the motives presented in the gospel. Christ, being lifted up, does draw all men unto him. The attractions of the cross are even greater than the terrors of the law. There is, however, the motive of fear as well as the motive of love; and how and where to appeal to the passion of fear in preaching is an interesting theme.

**Motive of  
fear.**

Preachers may fatally err both in leaving it out of account and in employing it unwisely and unscripturally. One thing is certain, that scriptural preachers did appeal to the motive of fear; they preached strongly the peril and the condemnation of the obdurately unrighteous; and who did this in more tremendous words than Christ.

We must preach the law as well as the gospel. But the law should be preached in the right way, not merely as a system of fear, punishment, and condemnation, but in its just relations to the constitution of the mind and the principle of conscience, in order to show how the law may be disobeyed, and thus how there may be sin. In this way the law becomes a means of conviction. The law should be preached, therefore, however severely and terribly, yet with discrimination, and should make its appeals to the reason and the moral nature of men; and in this way the penalties of the law have their proper effect.

The apostles preached the condemnation of the law in the spirit of compassion. They spoke this truth of Christ in love. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." They preached it persuasively as a motive. As Christ spoke of the wrath to come, and yearned to gather those who rejected the mercy of God into the kingdom; as the apostle Paul, in the spirit of Christ, proclaimed with unfaltering lips the curse of those who were guilty of unbelief, and yet wept when he talked of "the enemies of the cross of Christ," so preachers should not preach to the fears of men without true love to men in their hearts; they should not brandish the thunderbolts of the law in one hand, without offering the grace of the gospel in the other. If they fail to do this, the persuasive quality vanishes from their preaching.

We would now treat more specifically of those motives of persuasion which a preacher of the gospel may legitimately employ. Looking at them as moral motives, and to such only can the preacher appeal, they would come under the three general heads of Happiness, Duty, and Christian Virtue or Love.

**Motives  
of persuasion  
to be  
employed.**

1. Happiness. (*a.*) Temporal happiness, the lowest view of happiness, is greater on the side of righteousness than of unrighteousness. The man who has real

**Happiness.** uprightness of heart is the most apt to secure human friendship, honor, and worldly prosperity, and to be successful in whatever he undertakes to do with his fellow-men. Religion has the promise of this life as well as of that to come. All the sources of heavenly happiness itself are with us as rational and moral beings even now, for these depend upon the right disposition of the heart. Wherever God is, there must be happiness. But for every earthly or material enjoy-



ment of a lawful and not injurious nature, the good man, as a general rule, has a better prospect than the bad man. A long and happy life is promised to the obedient (Ps. 91 : 16 ; Deut. 11 : 21). Religion fosters a state of mind conducive to soundness of body and mind, for it leads to an observance of those laws by which health is maintained. It is living and doing well. It is the highest reason in all things. Yet one should be guarded here in not dwelling exclusively, as is sometimes done, on this merely prudential range of motives ; for often God blows them all away and afflicts the righteous, like Job, with great and crushing sorrows. Even the old Greek said that a man could not rightly be called happy until after death. Yet, on the other hand, one should not be deterred from employing this motive of temporal happiness. God uses it. He has made our natures for happiness, and if we fulfil the true ends of our being, if we live in accordance with the principles of our normal nature, we are happy. Sorrow as well as sin is an incident to our nature, not its original property. God, the source of joy, would pour joy through the hearts of all his creatures, and human demerit alone diminishes and destroys this happiness. A legitimate happiness, which may thus be experienced even in time, also springs from self-approbation in well-doing. He who does a good act is rewarded in his own mind. This happiness, from the exercise of holy affections to ourselves and others following from virtuous actions (*αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν ἐνέργειαι*), is something not liable to change, but is lasting and inalienable. If happiness is thus a true motive to persuade to good action, then the misery which accrues from the opposite course, since it is a dissuasive from evil, operates as a persuasive to good. The condemnation and misery of wicked men form an indirect persuasive to goodness.

Just fear as well as true happiness is a strong motive to right action. Both the light and the shadow, the joy and the terror, impel the soul toward God.

(*b.*) Eternal happiness resulting from righteous action. He who does the will of God shall share the blessedness of God, not only in time but in eternity.

2. Duty. This deals essentially with the moral part of our nature, and appeals to motives that have their seat in the conscience. Duty is a higher motive than happiness. Call conscience

what we may, account for its origin as we may, it is that part or faculty of our being which responds instinctively to the law of right. We call it, and call it justly, the voice of God within us, because it is that in us which answers to the voice of our moral ruler. It thus rises above the idea of expediency and of happiness. It is an unselfish and divine faculty. It interprets and reiterates the righteous law. That law would be powerless did it not appeal to the nature of the mind itself, which is made harmonious with and confirmatory of the law. We cannot help acknowledging the rightness of right, the wrongness of wrong. We are so formed that we must feel that we ought to do right, and here is the ground of the law of duty. Here is its great motive of persuasion. The doing of right because it is right, for its own sake, is the grand motive of duty to which as preachers of righteousness we can and should ever appeal. We must tell men that they should do right because it is right, and they will at least feel the tremendous power of this motive, and either yield to it and be saved or resist it and be condemned. In this appeal we have a still more potential and awful helper—God himself; for God is in the conscience more intimately than in the outer intellect, and he speaks there mysteriously as from an in-

ward throne, so that what the moral nature itself dictates to be right is reinforced by all the sanction of the divine will.<sup>1</sup>

3. Christian virtue or love. The love of God is the root-principle of Christian virtue. The moving power of the loving will of God, made known in his

Son Jesus Christ, is the central motive to be set forth by the Christian preacher. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

**Christian  
virtue  
or love.**

The love of God in Christ to sinners is, in fact, the gospel itself. This is the gospel preachers are to preach. Gratitude, faith, love, are appealed to in the strongest terms. God "first loved us"—a motive which, when once realized, creates a soul under the ribs of death.

As a natural and irresistible sequence of this divine love toward us, human love, or the Christ-like love of man for man—the Christian preacher's love for the souls of his hearers—forms a strong motive to be brought to bear upon them, and through this channel as it were of human love and sympathy the divine love flows. This is the secret of truly moving and persuasive preaching. One of his boy-hearers says of Dr. Arnold's preaching: "It was not the cold, clear voice of one giving his advice and warning from serene heights to those who were sinning and struggling below, but the warm, loving voice of one who, fighting for us and by our side, and calling on us to help him and ourselves and one another." Let us cultivate more than we do these holy affections and passions of the soul, this capacity of love and this power of sympathy. He who feels that he himself is a sinner saved, if saved, by the love of God, and who is thus brought in true love and sympathy with other sinners like

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<sup>1</sup> See art. "Theism," *Brit. Quar.*, July, 1871.

himself, will, like Paul, speak to them with a power of persuasion which is resistless.

Another form, perhaps, of this love of God to us, and our love to him, as a motive, is the appeal to men to live to the glory of God, in the true sense of God's glory. This is seeking the love of God in an unselfish spirit, and without reference to ourselves at all. This shuts out heaven and quenches hell. To the true and perfect mind this is the highest motive, and, in one sense, the only motive.

In these motives which have been mentioned, we appeal both to the lower and to the higher elements of our nature—to our self-interest, and to the pure, unselfish principle of the good of others and the glory of God.

As to the legitimate methods of persuasion, whether indirect or direct, there may be mentioned

**Methods**  
**of persuasion.** as some of them :

1. The indirect method of the use of dissuasives to wrong action springing from the evil which will certainly accrue. As has been said, the dissuading from evil is, in fact, one method to persuade to good. The evils and final miseries of sin are the persuasives of holiness.

2. The indirect method of the presentation of the alternative choice—*i. e.*, if one is not moved by the good consideration which is offered, he must take the alternative.

3. The use of mixed proofs and motives, blending the argumentative and persuasive forms of development.

4. The use of direct motives, without any abstract reasoning or circumlocution, addressed to the simple end to move the will and heart. This is comprehended in what is usually termed the hortatory discourse.

Of course our method of persuasion should be adapted



to the class of hearers we address ; and we should proceed in a natural way, by first interesting the intellect, bringing out intelligently the motives of persuasion, showing their importance, and their personal importance, and pressing them home upon the heart.

Vivid description, moral painting, is a powerful method of persuasion, in which one is led to see his own heart in the masterly delineation of character.

In striving to overcome prejudices, before the true motives can be presented, there are two methods : first, to endeavor to do away entirely with the false impression, by showing how unjust and absurd it is ; and, secondly, to admit the feeling, or prejudice, or passion, as having, perhaps, some ground for its existence, but to give it a truer direction. One says, for instance, " If I were only a Christian, I would be a better man than some Christians whom I know." Then press him to be such a Christian as he boasts that he would be. Another says, " I am too ambitious to be a follower of Christ. I freely confess that I am too aspiring to be thus lowly and humble." Then tell him that Christianity does not extinguish the natural motive of ambition, but leads to a purer ambition for things truly great and honorable.

**To  
overcome  
prejudices.**

Paul's reasoning with the Athenians in respect to the " unknown God " is one illustration of the skillful employment of this kind of persuasive argument, yielding as it does to the feeling or opinion of others for the moment, so far as it is not harmful to do so, in order to use it with power for the conviction and persuasion of those very persons, for one does not often persuade a man to do right by proving to him that he is wrong ; but if, by kindly and skillfully showing him that he is condemned by himself, by his own truer impulses and nobler reason,

you may convict him of wrong without injuring his self-respect and arousing his antagonism, and you not only convince but persuade.

What may be termed the motive of probability—sometimes used by preachers—should be employed very cautiously, if employed at all—*e.g.*, probably this may be all true ; probably there may be eternal peril to the totally irreligious. Such reasoning is of doubtful character and is apt to cause injurious reaction. It is better to preach the things that are, or the things that we believe—whatever they are—rather than those that may be.

5. Meditative development. We will not dwell long upon this. It is of two kinds. It may either signify a sermon in which the preacher follows out in a free, informal method his own course of quiet thinking upon some more purely spiritual theme, thinking aloud, as it were, and pursuing a monologue rather than making an address to others, revealing his experience, opening to view the secret recesses of his own mind and heart, rather than reasoning from objective views and relations of truth ; or, it may mean a sermon founded upon a text which was originally a strictly meditative utterance from the depths of the writer's religious experience, as many of the Psalms, or portions of the Psalms of David, and which, from its contemplative and subjective character, naturally induces religious contemplation and self-examination in others. This meditative preaching is not mere vague musing, but it is rather sinking down by pure thinking, of a prayerful and devotional kind, to the inmost depth and meaning of a subject. It arrives at principles by contemplation rather than by logical methods, and is a great art, too rarely possessed by preachers of divine truth. If we should hear the apostles preach in these days, we should doubtless say that the

apostle John was a meditative preacher and perhaps the profoundest preacher of them all. Yet this style is not greatly to be encouraged in ordinary preachers. Where it is literally subjective, in the sense of turning the thoughts inward into the preacher's own mind, it tends to weakness. Objective preaching, for the great mass of preachers, is the boldest, the safest, and decidedly the most effective. It does not deal in subtle refinements of thought. It takes the revealed word of God, sees its beauty, draws forth its power, uses its mighty forces of persuasion, is content with its simple teachings.

All these different modes of development which have been mentioned will, of course, vary widely in their form, style, and spirit ; but still there are some simple principles or qualities which should be found in the development of all kinds of sermons ; these are, the qualities of unity, perfectness, progress, and proportion.

Qualities  
of true  
development.

1. Unity. This has been and will be often mentioned in various relations ; but it cannot be too much urged. One general aim, one main impression, should, if possible, be given to one dis-  
course ; and this is all we ought to expect for one dis-  
course. This unity should run through its whole substance, and animate every fibre. This unity may be destroyed by yielding to the temptation of dwelling too long upon an interesting but isolated thought ; by treating entirely diverse topics in one discourse, with no general principle uniting them ; by mixing up two or more similar thoughts ; by following out metaphorical language wearisomely or trivially. Any discussion, on any of the parts of the sermon, however profitable and forcible in itself, which is not pertinent to the main subject, impairs unity. Any discussion of a purely dialectical or theo-

Unity.

logical character should not be carried out wearisomely or form the exclusive substance of the sermon. It is good for foundations, but there should be reared upon it a more beautiful superstructure. "The foundations," as another has said, "should be covered in." The whole development should have regard to every part.

2. Perfectness. This regards the parts as well as the whole. There should be freedom in carrying out every

**Perfectness.** part of a discourse to its legitimate end of interest, employing all the stores of thought and illustration. This is the portion of the discourse for its life to flow out in fullest currents, and not to be hampered by plans and rules. Each thought should be as thoroughly developed as if there were no other thought in the discourse. The idea of the main development should not override or destroy the complete finish, both intellectual and literary, of each of its parts. It is interesting where the preacher seems to give unlimited play to every faculty and every emotion, carrying out a thought to its furthest ramifications, drawing from all the richness of nature and life, and yet not without a method or a sagacious purpose which points each illustration, guides each flight of fancy, and, while seemingly most unrestrained, brings all to bear with power upon some one practical truth or lesson.

This free development of each of the parts, combined with the workmanlike welding together of all in one whole, so that there is no imperfect, meagre, flat, and unsatisfying portion of the sermon, constitutes completeness.

3. Progress. This has reference to the right ordering of thoughts, so that one thought should prepare for and

**Progress.** be succeeded by another which forms an advance; this secures an increasing momentum of impression. The sermon should not repeat



itself, or retrace its steps, but go on with accelerated power to the end.

4. Proportion. This has relation to the proportionate space each part or thought should occupy in regard to the main development, and to each other part of the discourse. This gives balance and

**Proportion.**

Vigorous brevity is thus secured where it is needed, and careful elaborateness where it is essential. Of course the object we have in view, and the peculiar character of the sermon, must decide this. In an expository sermon the explanation, which is commonly brief, becomes the elaborate part of the discourse. It is a great beauty when a preacher knows in what part the real pith of his sermon lies, and where to lay out his strength. This gives consistency to the sermon. The general idea of proportion is, that there should be a well-made and powerful body to the sermon. The strength should be, as it were, in the *loins* of the discourse. The sermon should be thoroughly compacted, and able to carry itself nobly ; not a dwarf with a giant's head and a feeble body.

That which is wanted in the body of a sermon is solidity of thought, rapidity of discussion, and a spiritual earnestness of purpose rising above every merely intellectual aim, and pressing the truth with every reason and motive drawn from time and eternity upon the individual heart. There should be an expanding fulness here, an unbound, rich, and living thought, a development which is a real growth from the germ of scriptural truth taken into the fructifying soil of the soul's meditation, ample and beautiful, and filled with nourishing fruit.

We are to regard also not only what we speak, but to whom we speak. What are the audience in the church there for? In what condition of heart and life are they? "Men, as a general rule feel, though feebly, the need of

religion ; and this common feeling or consciousness of the need of religion should be wrought upon and awakened still more. Men do not receive all that is proved, but that which agrees with their own modes of thinking. The mind is not closed against the preacher, but only barricaded. There are two accessible ways to it, through the conscience and the heart. The heart of no man is entirely shut up to nobler affections ; the criminal weeps at the thought of his children."

We might conceive of the *ideal* of a Christian sermon, not yet attained, or not attained by all, but which is adapted to the needs of our highest modern civilization, while it does not lose the earnestness and practical aim of the gospel.

**The ideal sermon.** It is unpretentious, devotional, springing from the profound study of a holy soul of the word of God, with Christ as the central, burning theme ; tender and full of love, but strong in apostolic faith, like the preaching of masculine Paul and Luther ; courageously hopeful for man and filled with the true "enthusiasm of humanity ;" thoughtful and substantial in reasoning, rich and interesting in ideas, but not intellectual so truly as spiritual ; not bound in any set forms but free with that liberty wherewith Christ makes free ; with an internal rather than external method of thought ; of the highest literary style because fresh and simple, almost plain and homely, so that the ignorant man and the child may understand what feeds the most highly educated hearer ; as well fitted for backwoodsmen as for philosophers, because it is deep and penetrating, is drawn from the common wells of truth and salvation, appeals to the common wants and desires of the heart, and is fitted to convert men from sin, and to lead them to and build them up in the life of God.

Nothing could be so simple and yet nothing so high

and difficult as such a sermon. It could not be learned in the schools for it is not theological, though it teaches a true theology. It must be taught by the Spirit of Christ to the consecrated mind that has conscientiously and laboriously done its own part in the way of thorough preparation.

Such preaching is a true "prophesying" in the New Testament sense of the term, for it speaks through man to the whole man, intellectual, affectional, and spiritual, as by the very voice of God.

The development of such a sermon will be but the expansion and filling out of thoughts and words furnished by the secretly inspiring influences of the Holy Spirit, and it will therefore be divinely adapted to the salvation of sinful men, and the edification of the church of Christ.

#### SEC. 19. *The Conclusion.*

The conclusion (*Schlussrede*) of a sermon is the fit winding up and the practical application of all that has preceded. In oratory it is called the "peroration" and holds the same relation to the end of the sermon that the "exordium" or "introduction" does to the beginning. It is not really the sermon itself, but is the taking leave of the subject in such a way as to gather up and forcibly impress its teachings. In the conclusion, the preacher, if he has wandered away from his hearers, is drawn back to them; he is reminded that it is for them he is preaching, and for their spiritual welfare; he is to leave the truth in their hearts.

The  
conclusion.

The conclusion is a trying and perilous part of the discourse, because it is always difficult to stop gracefully, to finish effectively. Boileau says:

"Qui ne sut se borner ne sut jamais écrire."

It is indeed a great thing to know when to stop. Luther, speaking of the qualities of a good preacher, says that "he should know when to make an end." There is a true conclusion to every discourse. The god Terminus alone, at the building of Rome, would not yield to Jove himself. The conclusions of great literary works, such as "Paradise Lost," "Jerusalem Delivered," and Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," are memorable for their beautiful simplicity. Many an effective sermon has been greatly weakened by drawing out its conclusion to too great length; as some one has quaintly said, "when a preacher has driven a nail in a sure place, instead of clinching it, and securing well the advantage, he hammers away till he breaks the head off, or splits the board."

The importance and advantages of a good conclusion are seen in the following reasons:

1. It enables the preacher to carry out the true idea and aim of preaching, *i.e.*, to give a practical application to what he preaches, directing it to the conscience and heart of his hearers. If the preacher has in his own mind no such determinate aim or purpose, he probably will not effect it by the most approved conclusion; illustrating the lines of the poet:

"In every work regard the author's end,  
Since none can compass more than they intend."

The end of preaching is the actual conversion and sanctification of souls. There may be, however, exceptions to the rule that the application should come in the conclusion, (*a.*) When, from the nature of the discussion, there is necessarily a continuous application in the body of the sermon. In certain kinds of discourse, as, for



instance, expository, hortatory, and historical discourses, the application may naturally run along with the development of the sermon, or, where the divisions of a topical sermon are themselves practical, no direct practical application is needed at the end. The less elaborate and argumentative the discourse, the less need of reserving the application for the end. (*b.*) When, from the nature of the audience or the occasion, there is necessarily a continuous application of the subject. The more general, illiterate, or youthful the audience, the more need of a running application of the theme to the conscience and heart, in order to keep attention alive, and to produce a vivid impression.

But, notwithstanding these exceptions, a good conclusion is needed to enforce the moral impression of a whole sermon ; and in the case of a strictly topical and argumentative discourse, it is almost without exception essential.

Some audiences, or some persons in an audience, it is true, from the fact of their possessing higher intelligence and conscientiousness than others will make the application of a sermon for themselves ; but these exceptional audiences and individual minds are not to be the invariable rule for others. The preacher is to leave the application, or the lesson of the sermon, more or less directly in the hearts and consciences of his hearers. A conclusion which is always concluding and never seems to come to an end, because there is no particular aim or purpose in the mind of the preacher himself, is a weak and unfortunate conclusion.

2. It combines the scattered impressions of a sermon into one powerful impression, and thus adds to the effect of whatever has gone before. The skillful preacher understands this, and shapes his whole sermon so as to

make the conclusion effective, and to leave a deep impression at last.

3. It preserves the sensibilities of preacher and hearer from being exhausted. It does this by retaining all the freshness and force of feeling for the final appeal.

4. It avoids a rude abruptness in closing. It gives a moment's opportunity for the mind to pause and reflect upon the whole subject gone over; it is the attainment of a momentary superior elevation, from which the eye of the speaker and hearer may sweep back over the sermon, and take in its entire moral impression.

In a word a forcible conclusion may sometimes save a weak sermon, and a weak conclusion is enough to spoil a strong sermon.

We will now look at the different parts of the conclusion. The "conclusion" or "peroration" of a discourse was, in ancient oratory, divided into the recapitulation and the appeal to the passions. In modern times, and especially in the sermon, the conclusion, rhetorically treated, is commonly divided by writers on homiletics into the recapitulation, the inferences, and the appeal to the feelings, or the personal appeal; and each of these, or all combined, may form the conclusion.

And what the conclusion should be—whether one of these parts should be chosen, or all of them—is to be decided by the character of the development, and by studying how to increase the force of the moral impression, which should be strongest at the end. There ought to be no set manner of ending a sermon; and, generally speaking, a good sermon ends itself. Those are the best conclusions that make themselves, and that are not too long in the making. Joseph Hall, in his preface to his "Virtues and Vices," says, "I desire not to say all

that might be said, but enough." The famous Dr. Barrow, after preaching three mortal hours, was finally blown down by the organ's setting up to play ; and old Thomas Fuller gives a ludicrous account of an Augustine friar who came to an end more summarily still relating that the friar "bellowed so loud that he lost his argument, conscience, and voice, at once and together."

1. Recapitulation. This can be borne only by a decidedly argumentative discussion, and it is borrowed from the forensic address. That legal and terse kind of recapitulation often increases the power of a

#### Recapitulation.

discourse by compressing its substance into a small space. It likewise strengthens the whole argument, by binding up weak and strong arguments, thus giving an impression of finish and strength to the whole. It serves, above all, to aid the memory, and it is addressed to the intellect more than the feelings. The recapitulation should be, (*a.*) rapid and clear. In the closing remarks, or the winding up of a sermon, nothing is so fatal as tediousness ; everything should be condensed, rapid, hastening *ad eventum*. There should be nothing stiff, formal, and statistical in the recapitulation ; its design, in addition to assisting the memory, is to concentrate the force of the separate heads of argument into one, thus preparing the way to the application. (*b.*) It should not repeat arguments in precisely the same language as that employed in the body of the sermon, but these should be cast in a fresh form. (*c.*) It is sometimes effective to vary the order of the arguments themselves, generally by arranging them in a climactic order. (*d.*) The recapitulation should have certainty and confidence of tone. It supposes that the truths enumerated have been proved and settled ; that they have come out from the vague and

contradictory condition of the beginning of the sermon into distinct and established shapes.

As has been hinted, the recapitulation is not always desirable, particularly if one has nothing especial to recapitulate, if he has not preached a solid sermon, or if the ideas of the sermon have been ill digested and ill arranged. The recapitulation, in some instances, may be made during the progress of the discussion, in order to give a clearer view of the connection of parts while passing on, and to impress and gather up all the thoughts, so that at the close there is no need of any further mentioning of these. Above all, a recapitulation is inadmissible when the appeal to the feelings grows naturally out of the last topic discussed, or the last division introduced.

2. Inferences and remarks. These indicate the use which is made of the subject after the discussion is con-

cluded. They form a method of making the **Inferences.** direct application of the arguments. Inferences may be made to bring out more clearly the symmetry of truth. Thus, after discussing the doctrine of moral evil in a series of inferences, one may show its deep relations to other and brighter doctrines of the gospel, and may thus take a broad and rapid sweep from the basis of the discussion, around the whole circle of related truth. Inferences may also conduce to unexpected, powerful impressions.

“ People think more of the explanation and application, not so much of the argument.”

The argument is in fact preparing the way for the application.

After thoroughly discussing a topic, we may in an inference suddenly open a hidden relation in an entirely different direction ; and this may have been deliberately prepared for during the whole sermon, or the mine may



have been silently dug under the citadel of the unbelieving heart. Inferences should not, however, be suffered to destroy the unity of the discourse, which is their tendency, and which is to be carefully guarded against. Rather than do this, they had better be left out altogether.

As to rules for inferences :

1. They should be drawn directly from the development of the sermon. Thus in the argumentative sermon, after we have given the hearers a view of the proofs, we may in the application bring home the truth that has been proved, more particularly to the hearers' own minds ; we thus follow out the same design we have heretofore pursued.

**Rules for  
inferences.**

In the expository sermon, we may close with the uses and lessons we have gained, as applied to the different conditions of our hearers. In the persuasive sermon, there should be at the end a more close application of the motives as directed to the particular action to which we would persuade men. Thus the subject and our own particular aim in its discussion should shape the character of the inferences. They should be parts of the body of the sermon ; they should bear the stamp of their common origin, and belong to the same family of thoughts and ideas. There may be sometimes an exception to this rule, when the whole discussion of a theme is intended to be only subsidiary to a different application of the subject. Thus, in a biographical discourse, after one has set forth the virtues and character of an individual—in the conclusion he may enforce some one or more moral truths that have been livingly exemplified. So, too, the explanation in the body of a sermon, of a certain truth, may be subservient to the setting forth of some other nearly-related truth ; or it may show a personal duty, or may lead to a distinct self-ap-

plication, or self-examination. An argument upon a truth may lead to the conviction of a duty ; indeed, whatever the character of a sermon is, the use of it in the conclusion should be persuasive.

Coquerel says : " The peroration should be drawn from the very heart of the subject, should be something striking, something felicitous, something by itself apart, something different from what has gone before, though derived from it, something more vehement and direct, which completes and forms the crown of the whole sermon."

2. They should be forcible, *i.e.*, they should not be feeble or frivolous inferences ; and they should not be all the inferences that could possibly be drawn from a subject. There should be weight and freshness in them. In the application, we go beyond the bare general truth of our subject, and present those forcible conclusions which are to persuade our hearers in particular. Inferences may be drawn from other inferences, if they are still in harmony with the general discussion, and if they grow out of it.

As has been said, there may possibly be cases where the inference is entirely aside from the definite subject of the sermon—thus, a lesson to the impenitent may follow a sermon addressed to believers. This kind of side-issue, or divergent inference, should at least follow a discourse which abounds in solid thought, which carries all before it, and which makes room for itself to send its messages in every direction. As a general rule, it is more forcible to make, in the conclusion, a final concentration upon one point which has been more widely discussed and illustrated in the body of the sermon, rather than to make a final diffusion of thought, or widening out of the discussion into general remarks.

Dr. Fitch says that it is best always to make the appli-

cation of the whole subject, and not of the particular thoughts. Build the fortification as nicely and elaborately, piece by piece, as you may, and then fire from it. Subjects, however, differ. Some lead irresistibly to broad and universal conclusions, especially those which relate to the nature of God.

3. They should have regard to the character and state of mind of the hearers, as well as to the character and design of the subject ; *e.g.*, when the hearer is reasonably supposed to be persuaded of the truth or necessity of a certain duty, he should then be told how to perform that duty, and should be helped to overcome its difficulties. You do not wish so much to add anything more to convince him, as to aid in doing the thing of which he is presumed to be already persuaded. Christians and unbelievers, as they are in different states of mind, are to be differently addressed in the conclusion. Encouragements, alarms, hopes, fears, choices, affections, are different in each.

4. They should increase in force and importance. Remarks relating to truth or conviction should precede those respecting duty or persuasion. And in persuasion we should address those first who are most favorably disposed, and therefore, *ceteris paribus*, we should address the converted before the unconverted.

5. They should be free from stiffness, dulness, and monotonousness. Never should those qualities appear in a conclusion, if they do anywhere else, as it is absolutely needful that there should be variety, individuality, and vivid life in our concluding remarks, for here the persuasive element in the discourse is concentrated and intensified.

If there be life and warmth in any part of the discourse it naturally comes in that portion of it where the infer-

ence is drawn, where the lesson is enforced, where the argument is driven home. Here the weightiest and most solemn truths should be spoken with earnestness and power. If, as the rule of the old Greek dramatist was, that there should be a plain or a dead level somewhere in the drama where the mind might rest awhile in the more commonplace statement of thought, or fact, or action—and the same might be said of a sermon—this certainly should not be at the end.

Some preachers draw pretty much the same inferences from all subjects ; but we had better make one bold, impressive, original inference, than a dozen that are commonplace. F. W. Robertson, though abounding in inferential remarks, rarely cast his conclusion into a set of formal inferences, but in closing usually made one strong remark, one unexpected deduction, driven with tremendous power by all that had gone before. Thus, in a sermon to men of wealth he says, "To conclude ;" and in a few condensed words he pours out a burning torrent of rebuke upon the clergy of England for their flattery of men of wealth, and their cowardly apologizing for the vices of the rich. Such a sermon was not forgotten. It left an ineffaceable impression on the conscience of those persons it was meant to reach.

Doddridge says that the conclusion of a sermon should be striking. Massillon sometimes closed with a supplication. Each remark of a conclusion should rise in power, should be free and untrammelled, and often abrupt as a thunder-peal, smiting the conscience with terror.

Dr. Fitch says, that in the application there is more occasion for vehemence and force than in any other part. Jonathan Edwards was inclined to be prolix in his conclusions ; they were often more full of thought than feeling.



I. Appeal to the feelings. There are usually three modes of ending a sermon : (a.) In the form of a series of inferences as just suggested ; (b.) In the form of detached observations following **Appeal to the feelings.** generally biographical and historical subjects ; (c.) In the form of direct address or appeal, which follows out the aim of the sermon, or is appended directly to the body of the discourse. In this direct address is generally the place for the appeal to the feelings.

This address to the feelings is something above all art, and the more spontaneous and natural it is the better. That is often the inspired moment of the discourse ; it is inspired or not ; it is real or artificial ; it is everything or nothing. There should be true feeling in it, or the speaker should not attempt an appeal to the feelings of others.

(1.) The whole sermon should be more or less arranged for the moral and emotional appeal of the conclusion. This should be unconsciously rather than artfully done. All should hasten to the end. One should begin the sermon with the end in view. He should strike the same chord at the end which he did at the beginning, though with tenfold force. If one has this aim, to leave a deep and lasting impression on the heart of the hearers, pathetic and passionate thoughts will present themselves while he is composing the sermon, and these should be remembered and gathered up for the conclusive appeal.

(2.) The appeal should not be for rhetorical, but for true effect. The conclusions of Demosthenes' and Æschines' orations "On the Crown" were introduced to cause in their hearers the feeling which the orators wished to create. Their banishment or triumph, their political life or death, depended on the result. They

reserved their strong word for the last. They hurled it with all their force upon the hearts of their hearers. It was a real thing with them to succeed. It was no child's play. And has the preacher any smaller stake? Has he any less enduring crown in view? Should he himself have less feeling? Baxter says, in his "Reformed Pastor," "I know not what others think, but for my own part, I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself that I deal not with my own and others' souls as one that looks for the great day of the Lord, and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words, and that such astonishing matters do not wholly absorb my mind. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly, and how I can let men alone in their sins, and that I do not go to them and beseech them, for the Lord's sake, to repent, however they take it, or whatever pains or trouble it should cost me. I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smites me that I have been no more serious and fervent in such a cause. It accuses me not so much for want of human ornaments and elegancy, but it asketh me, 'How couldst thou speak of life and death with such a heart?' "

(3.) The appeal should not be overdrawn. Hamlet's advice is still good; there should be a calmness, a self-possession, even in the very torrent and flow of the most pathetic appeal. One must control himself, to control his audience. He should not go before them in the manifestation of emotion. Pathos in the conclusion does not so much consist in a strained, high-pitched voice, or an agitated manner, or intense and harrowing language, as in a certain deepening of the tone of feeling, a concentration of thought, and a profound earnestness of the whole man. Sometimes a preacher must weep, and he would not have a true heart if he did not; but it were

better for him not to weep. Yet if he cannot prevent tears, let them flow ; Christ wept over Jerusalem. It is no weakness to feel deeply, but restrained emotion is often more powerful than its expression ; and the appeal should be made not so much to the superficial as to the spiritual sensibilities.

(4.) All appeals to feeling should be brief. Thus the most touching, the most direct remark one has to make comes naturally, and it were better, spontaneously.

It should be said in as simple and few words as possible.

“ Tears dry fast.” Let nature’s short road to the feelings be studied. A particular case, or a personal fact, is more apt than a general observation to touch the feelings. An allusion to some individual, or to some circumstance, is more moving in the conclusion than the best philosophical generalizations. For the real close itself, so far as the feelings are concerned, nothing is more impressive and moving than a feeling, solemn passage of Scripture, either the text or some other perhaps still more pointed word of Scripture. Then the sermon begins and ends with the word of God. The voice of God first breaks the silence, and after the voice of man has been heard for a while, the voice of God comes again at the close ; and if this is the warm expression of the love of the gospel, simple, genuine, pure, it will be so much the more powerful.

(5.) An indirect appeal is often effective. Men are jealous of appeals to their feelings : and perhaps the strongest appeal, after all, is so to construct the whole discourse as that it shall make its own appeal.

“ Of every noble work the silent part is best,  
Of all expression that which cannot be expressed.”

We are more and more inclined to think that the conclusion of a sermon should not be highly wrought, but

simple. This is the trial of the conclusion. If there is an appeal to the feelings, it should flow naturally from the last remark or thought of the sermon, rather than arouse a distinct expectation that now an appeal is to be made to the impenitent, to the young, to church members. This tends to deprive the conclusion of its effect. Sometimes the whole concluding appeal may be in a single sentence. This was peculiarly characteristic of Luther's "conclusions." A

**Luther's  
conclusions.**

German writer says, "Luther did not lay great stress on the conclusion, and many of his sermons are without any recapitulation. He ends some of his sermons abruptly, with the words, 'Enough now has been said upon this Scripture ; let us call upon the grace of God.' In other discourses he simply, in conclusion, repeats the main thought of the last division of the discourse, and says, 'Have faith and love ; abide in them ; so you can have and do all this.' Or he closes with a wish : 'God grant that we also may comprehend ;' or 'God keep us, save us, and grant that we may earnestly hold to this teaching, so that we may not fall into shameful sin and reproach.' "

The concluding words of mediæval sermons were usually some brief devotional formula like this : "*Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum qui cum Deo Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat omnipotens in secula seculorum. Amen.*"

The following is the ending of an old English sermon of 1430 :

"Now our swete Lord Ihesu Christo gyfte vs grace swa Godd for to honour, and oure euencristen for to liefte, and oure selfe for to make, that we may for oure honourynge be honourede, and for oure liefte be liefede, and for oure mekeness be lyftede up into heighe blysse



of heven, that he boghte vs with his swete blude and his precieuse passion. Amen."

The concluding of a sermon with a text of Scripture, either the text of the sermon, or one similar to it in meaning, as has been said, always makes an appropriate and sometimes impressive ending.

Stereotyped forms of appeal, of direct appeal to the unconverted, have lost much of their power. There is sometimes an impressiveness in leaving them off altogether.

**Stereotyped  
forms  
of appeal.**

In the homiletical writers of the seventeenth century there was much of this formal character given to the application or conclusion. A sermon was made to end so as to subserve five uses, the

- (1.) *Usus didasculus.*
- (2.) *Usus elencticus.*
- (3.) *Usus epanorthoticus.*
- (4.) *Usus pædanticus.*
- (5.) *Usus paracleticus.*

or, for instructing, proving, correcting, disciplining, consoling.<sup>1</sup>

But this is evidently asking too much of every sermon, and of every conclusion of every sermon. These good results should rather belong to the whole sermon and its uses, than simply to the conclusion; yet the above psychological distinctions, which are in themselves true and valuable, show that, according to the judgment of these old writers, a sermon should never be without point, or particular serviceability for some definite end.

This end, however, should be skillfully brought about. It is vain to spread the net in the sight of any bird.

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<sup>1</sup> Henke, p. 530 (note).

Even the solemn appeal to the unconverted may be overdone and fall without effect.

But it may possibly be that—the custom of direct appeal having gone so much into disuse, and sermons having become so essayish and impersonal, and devoid of directness and point—a return now and then to the old method of direct appeal to the impenitent, at the close of the sermon, might, in some cases, be deeply effective.

Earnestness on the part of the preacher to do good to the souls of his hearers is something that cannot be confined to rules, that overrides all forms, and that usually makes its own methods.

The conclusion of Whitefield's sermon on the "Kingdom of God" is an example of this intensely earnest kind of personal appeal.

The great and only question is, How is the deepest impression to be made by a sermon? It certainly depends very much on the conclusion. The sermon has been compared to a river; it may be small at its beginning, but at its close, when it pours itself into the ocean, it should be the fullest in volume, the profoundest in depth, the most majestic in movement, though, perhaps, at that very moment, it may be the calmest to all appearance, from the fact that it is pouring along its greatest volume. So the conclusion of a sermon on divine truth may be apparently the most tranquil part of the sermon; but that is, and should be, the tranquillity of the deepest feeling, of the fullest thought, of the most solemn and momentous truth; for it has then reached a point where it is about to mingle with the ocean of eternal life or death; it is "the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death;" the word has been spoken, and it returns to God; the conclusion may be calm, and even joyful, but it should be the calmness of earnest and solemn feeling.

As a suggestion in closing a sermon, let the preacher be *kind* in his words and manner, even to the wickedest and worst.

In the moment of the most solemn adjuration, or even burning rebuke and denunciation, let the affectionateness of the gospel glow. This personal appeal in all cases is difficult, and is often better to be indicated than actually made ; but there should be, directly or indirectly, with boldness, but in love, a personal application of the sermon ; and there may be times when nothing else is suitable, or nothing will reach the point, excepting the words of Nathan to David, " Thou art the man !" Love in the heart will teach us, and it alone will teach us, how to reach the hearts of our sinful fellow-men.

The preacher should ever keep in mind that the end of preaching is not preaching itself, but a lodgment of the renovating truth in the hearts of those who hear ; in the language of Vinet, " God has purposed that man should be the channel of truth to man. Not only are words to be transmitted and repeated ; *a life is to be communicated.*"

## FIFTH DIVISION.

### CLASSIFICATION OF SERMONS.

#### SEC. 20. *Classification of Sermons according to their treatment and form.*

Sermons may be classified according to two general methods : first, as having mainly reference to the character of the discourse itself, or what might be called its formal treatment ; and second, as having reference mainly to its mode of delivery. We will now notice the first of these, or sermons classified according to their real character and form of treatment.

**Sermons classified according to their essential character and treatment.** In no part of the science of homiletics (if it be a science) is there more of confusion than in the attempt of authors to classify sermons according to their intrinsic qualities—their essential form and treatment. Every writer has a system of his own ; therefore we have not thought it worth the while to enter largely into this matter of the classification of sermons according to their nature and form ; but would name only a few of the principal kinds of sermons, some of which have been already more fully treated of.

As an example of the great fertility of analysis in this



field we would point to "Gerard and Campbell's" list of different kinds of sermons, as chiefly adopted by Dr. Fitch. 1. Critical expository lecture, on a text difficult of exposition. 2. **Fertility of classification.**

Practical expository lecture, on a text not so difficult of exposition. 3. Explanatory sermon; in other words, "instructive" and "explicatory." 4. Biographical sermon; in other words, "commendatory," "panegyric." 5. Particular demonstrative, setting forth some one act or quality of a good life. 6. General demonstrative, presenting the sum of virtues of one life. 7. Argumentative; in other words, "convictive" or "probatory." 8. Pathetic, presenting motives without particular reference to duties. 9. General persuasive; a duty enforced by fit motives. 10. Particular persuasive; a duty enforced by some one motive taken for text, etc., etc. Dr. Fitch, however, thinks that all sermons, in respect of their method of treatment, may be comprehended under the three simple divisions of Explanatory, Argumentative, and Persuasive. Argumentative discourses Dr. Fitch considers to be best for young writers, for youth is the argumentative age, and such discourses are the most easily susceptible of unity of treatment. But stiff, scholastic forms of argumentation should be avoided; the logic should be animated with sentiment and feeling. The unity of the Persuasive discourse consists not so much in having one subject or argument, as in having one tendency in the various parts to affect the will and feelings.

Perhaps the simplest classification which could be made, and which would embrace the most of all ordinary descriptions of sermons, is, 1. The textual **The simplest** (analytic); 2. The topical, sometimes called **classification.** theme sermons, or subject-sermons (synthetic); 3. The textual-topical, (analytic-synthetic). If desired, how-

ever, to be more full and explicit, we would offer the following classification of sermons according to their subject-matter and internal treatment :

1. As depending upon the manner of treating the text :  
(*a.*) textual ; (*b.*) topical ; (*c.*) expository.

2. As depending upon the manner of  
Fuller treating the subject : (*a.*) doctrinal ; (*b.*)  
classification. ethical ; (*c.*) metaphysical ; (*d.*) historical.

3. As depending upon the general rhetorical treatment : (*a.*) argumentative ; (*b.*) meditative ; (*c.*) descriptive ; (*d.*) hortatory.

One sermon sometimes, in fact, combines all, or nearly all, the characteristics which have just been mentioned ; although generally in one sermon some one quality, or some one characteristic of matter or form, decidedly predominates, which gives it its stamp ; but even the simple classifications which we have given show the great variety there may be and should be in the treatment of religious

truth from the pulpit. Let us look at this  
Variety quality of variety in the treatment of divine  
of treatment. truth necessary for the pulpit, and, by way of illustration, at a few of the different kinds of treatment, which it were well to consider, since the preacher, from his peculiar habit of mind, may and does naturally fall into one stereotyped style of sermonizing ; it may be, for example, dealing principally with the rational methods of presenting truth, which demand a style of discussion more or less philosophical.

(*a.*) The metaphysical or philosophical sermon. This method, dealing almost exclusively with thought, is a

Metaphysical noble method ; but great care should be  
sermon. taken not to suffer this to become a rigidly uniform mode of sermonizing. The preacher must consult all kinds and capacities of minds. The

main part of a miscellaneous congregation is composed of men, women, and children, of many who are illiterate and ignorant, are not highly intellectual, are not metaphysical reasoners, and must be addressed through the common understanding, sensibility, and imagination, by facts, illustrations, and a style of discussion that touches the popular conscience and heart. One should therefore now and then write simpler sermons, and occasionally a descriptive sermon.

(*b.*) The moral-dramatic sermon. This form of preaching has gone too much out of vogue ; but in the hands of a master it is powerful. Two of the most interesting of Dr. Eleazer Fitch's discourses, which he delivered to the students of Yale College, are upon "The sacrifice

**Moral-  
dramatic  
sermon.**

of Isaac," abounding in eloquent descriptive writing in which the picture is wrought to the highest degree of the morally picturesque. The conversation between Abraham and Isaac, and the thoughts of Abraham, as the father and child climb Mount Moriah, are imagined with great pathos and power, and every minute circumstance in the narrative was seized upon and enlarged with the greatest dramatic skill. This is a legitimate use of art. Such sermons cannot be forgotten. We neglect too much this dramatic element. Power is lost by shutting up ourselves exclusively to the didactic style, and not taking advantage of the rich narrative, poetic, and dramatic portions of the Bible, and of the vast field of human life.

(*c.*) The expository sermon. This is happily beginning to reassert its place in the pulpit. We have already dwelt with some particularity upon this kind of sermon. Its advantages are manifold. It was the style of the early ages.

**Expository  
sermon.**

It is more like the scriptural and apostolic method of preaching than any other, confining itself more exclusively to the Scriptures, and thus drawing forth their marrow of doctrine. Whether simply the exposition of a passage comprising one sermon, or of a continuous series of passages, or a book comprising a number of sermons, it drives preachers and hearers to a study of the Scripture in its connection of parts. The great reason why it is not more popular is, as has been suggested, that it is made too easy a matter—something for rainy days and hot afternoons ; and in the form of it it is not always well-arranged for practical effect, the texts are not massed, the leading thought is not seized, and the whole lacks unity of aim ; for a genuine expository sermon is not a shambling commentary or set of running remarks, but is a practical discourse upon a passage of inspiration—if the passage be a number of doctrinal texts, the development of the ground-idea ; if it be a narrative, the aim, sense, and lesson of the whole. In a word, then, there should be healthful variety in the ministrations of the pulpit. Preachers should have no cast-iron plan of making sermons, no bullet-mould form, but should introduce novelty into their methods of presenting truth, not recurring constantly to the same themes ; not going over and over the same beaten path, but opening the infinite fields of truth ever fresh and green ; and, above all, preaching with adaptation to men's wants, sorrows, duties, and faults, and consulting all kinds of minds. It should be remembered by the preacher that the world is full of ignorance and sorrow as well as sin, and that the comforts and hopes of the gospel are addressed not only to the consciences but to the troubled hearts of men borne down by the astonishing changes and terrible disappointments of a harsh world. If preaching is indeed



rooted in the Word of God, it will tend to have this varied originality; all the plants of the Lord's garden will appear by turns in their manifold beauty, wet with morning dew, and there will be eternal freshness in preaching. But we now proceed to a form of sermonizing which has been and is still held by able men, and which deserves a respectful consideration, viz., the theory that preaching consists pre-eminently and even exclusively of the argumentative discussion of theology.

(*d.*) The theological sermon. It has been thought that the great results of preaching are to be obtained, and obtained only, by the ratiocinative method of setting forth doctrinal truth. Dr. Emmons, Dr. Eleazer Fitch, and many others of our eminent New England preachers, both dead and living, have been and are advocates of this theory. Dr. Lyman Beecher's quaint prescription for a sermon was that it should be "heavy and hot." The style of his preaching has been characterized in the familiar phrase of "logic on fire." Those preachers who were mostly of a revival order—or that was their aim—like Nettleton, and President Finney of Oberlin, a man of logical mind, and bred a lawyer, had a predominance of the argumentative element in their sermonizing; and they introduced the ratiocinative method with a deliberate purpose to reach the conscience through the reasoning faculty, and thus to enhance the impression of divine truth. The sermon was set whirling with the momentum of a constantly revolving argumentation and powerfully increasing reasoning, that it might strike an indelible die on the heart. Dr. Alexander, of Princeton, in his suggestive work, entitled "Thoughts on Preaching," was in favor of this style of sermonizing, which, in

The  
theological  
sermon.

the past, has been the chief method of American, and especially New England, preaching. Dr. Fitch's fundamental conception of good preaching was to make truth stand in a clear light to the reason, by addressing the understanding with those irrefutable arguments that are drawn from a consistent system of doctrinal theology, appealing to the laws and principles of the mind which are cognate to the truths of revelation. "The gospel," he said, "should be preached as a system of consistent truth, bearing with one harmonious design on the great object of repentance and salvation. Now if a preacher of the gospel would hope to bring its salutary power on the hearts of men, he should enter into the design of God in this very respect, and set forth the various doctrines and precepts of the gospel as one harmonious system, having in all its parts one salutary and practical bearing on man. The harmony of which we speak is the agreement of the truths of the Scriptures in their practical bearing; the harmony not only of the doctrines with one another, but of the doctrines with the precepts. It is obvious that a system of doctrinal representation agreeing with itself in all its parts might be made out, and yet the various parts in themselves be erroneous and aside from the practical intent of the gospel. But we refer to that system and harmony which exist in doctrines; their agreeing with each other not merely in abstract speculation, but, above all, in this respect that they have all one practical tendency, lending their united power to the one object of promoting faith and salvation. One will be sustained in its practical bearing with the whole force of all the others. And if there is any way of making bare the sword of the Spirit and presenting it to the heart in all its sharpness, if there is any way of presenting the full power of the

gospel before the minds of hearers, this is the way." This mode of argumentative theological preaching he himself followed almost exclusively, as the art of moral persuasion bearing upon the reason and conscience. In the hands of such a man (and no one has a higher opinion of Dr. Fitch as a preacher than the writer), and of such men as Nathaniel Taylor, Lyman Beecher, Dr. Emmons, Samuel Hopkins, Jonathan Edwards, this kind of preaching was a consistent, powerful, and successful method ; for it had strength in itself and strong, good men were behind it ; but even with such examples we venture to say that this is not the only method, nor the oldest method, nor, perhaps, in the main, the best conceivable method of preaching Christ. Although the presentation of theology in its systematic form is one legitimate (as much so as the ethical or the exegetical) department of preaching, and although Christian "doctrine," in the right view of it, is the staple of preaching, yet unless we consider theology to be a synonym for Scriptural teaching, or divine truth, which it certainly is not, since our most orthodox creeds are, as their technical name is, only "symbols" of the faith—we can but consider theological preaching, scientifically such, though true and fit in its order, to be partial rather than universal. It has its proper place. Theology, we would say, is quite indispensable in the preacher himself, if not always—or too much of it—in the sermon. A preacher should be ashamed not to have a thorough knowledge of the philosophy and literature of his profession—even as any well-educated lawyer or physician has of his profession. Scientific theology is a department of learning than which there is none higher, for it comprehends the history of the struggles of the best and purest minds the world has seen to reduce to principles the verities of religion,

although theology is not coextensive with religion. The Bible and the phenomena of spiritual experience given, men have attempted to bring them to the purely dogmatic statement, and combine them in a system harmonious in its parts—a praiseworthy effort and one absolutely inevitable, since the reason seeks unity. In one sense a doctrine which has no idea in it that the reason can grasp, which is not apprehended by the last analysis of the judgment, is no proper object of faith, or even of knowledge, especially if we view reason, not merely as the faculty of judging, but as the organ of spiritual truth, “the eye of the mind which perceives the substantial in the phenomenal.” Theology is also a progressive science, and one may be thus ever perfecting his own theological system. The theological discussions of such an independent and vigorous thinker as Mark Hopkins—himself a humble and spiritual Christian—are among the most elevating and educating exercises that the mind can subject itself to, and the closer they are and the more concentrated the attention they demand, the more ennobling is their influence, carrying the mind into the world of divine ideas and near to God, the supreme reason. We confess that there is to us an austere charm in the picture of such a primitive New England theologian as Nathaniel Emmons sitting in his unadorned study—where he had thought and worked for fifty years—ever ready to converse with his parishioners and students on high subjects: of God, the divine purposes, foreknowledge, the human will, sin, faith, and redemption, as if these things were the only real things, the only things worth thinking upon or living for. It does not present to us, it is true, the picture of the nearest resemblance to Christ as a teacher and pastor of souls, but it has its own high import and worth. But we ought not



to forget that it is the Holy Ghost, not man's thinking, that makes the strong preacher ; that enables him to say " He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms." This is because the renewing power is divine, and the mightiest preaching is that which is " with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power." Men are gifted with freedom—they are to choose God freely—that is their noblest prerogative and highest obligation ; but, in the death of sin in which they lie, the Holy Spirit must awaken the native energy of soul to love and obey God, " for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do." They are not compelled nor forced to act, having the power to act and to resist ; but as they are acted upon, they act ; as they are moved, they move ; as they are called, they obey, and by a free movement of the human will with the divine, they are borne on into the kingdom of God. The mighty impulse of a new life is from above, and without it preaching is powerless. " It is not of man that willeth but of God that sheweth mercy." Philosophical thinking has, however, its important uses on the human side of the preacher's work. It is seen especially in the thoughtful method of his sermons. Without a philosophy of religion, preaching would run the risk of being of a boneless and mollusious sort. It would fail in the quality of intellectual substance. It would also lack depth, which is the power to arrive at principles through a great number of individual objects and circumstances, and that presupposes a penetrative force of mind. *It would be a sad day for preaching when the intellectual element was left out of it.* It must not lose its hold upon thinking minds. There can be little religion that is worth much which is not the clear act of the intellect, as well as of the conscience, the will, and the

affections. He who views truth in its broadest philosophical generalization can bring to bear with immense force his whole system upon one point, like the complicated machinery of a factory that all comes down in one trip-hammer blow. The decline of interest in a biblical theology in our seminaries and pulpits, if not compensated by something higher and better, is a disastrous blow to preaching; and it is a disastrous blow in any event; and the influence of the great modern realistic and practical preachers on the sermons of young men in respect of vagueness and obscurity in the expression of Christian truth, is noticeable. While we thus hold to theology as the "*scientia scientiarum*," and to its place in preaching, yet divine truth is not always to be presented in a strictly philosophical and doctrinal form—as is never done in the Bible, since "there is not a single abstraction in the Scriptures,"<sup>1</sup> but also in concrete and vital methods.

The following passage is, we think, to the point: "Where religion is regarded exclusively or principally as a matter of the understanding, there the tyranny of Intellectualism is soon felt. It is this tendency which overrates the value of a correct conception of faith, even to the detriment of the spiritual life, and confounds the subjective conception of truth with truth itself. This intellectual bent easily degenerates into an unhealthy gnostic tendency, which attempts to grasp religious truth merely by the reasoning and speculating understanding, and confounds thought with knowledge, while distinction between religion and theology is gradually lost. Since, however, this system must not only be formulated, but also defended, the Intellectualist is very easily drawn into

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<sup>1</sup> Shedd's "Homiletics and Pastoral Theology," p. 78.

the path of Doctrinalism, which discovers the nature of religion exclusively in dogma as such. Doctrinalism may exhibit the form of Rationalism, as well as that of supra-naturalism. The former considers reason not merely as the organ, but as the very source and supreme arbiter, of religious truth ; the other accepts the existence and the contents of a supra-natural revelation, but receives this rather as a doctrine announced by supreme authority. The adherent of the last-named view easily becomes a strict orthodoxist with regard to the traditional confession, valuing soundness of faith even at the expense of the faith itself. From this standpoint the intellect works only receptively, whilst with the rationalist it has more a critical sway. Where the sovereignty of this partial tendency is not encountered by any other forces, it may finally lead the believer to the precipice of unbelief, the Protestant into the arms of Rome." <sup>1</sup>

Theologians of the most orthodox sect sometimes forget that revelation is mainly in the sphere of pure being, and that it is not so much a revelation of doctrine as of fact—of the most significant and world-renovating facts of Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and gift of his spirit to men ; that by a corresponding act of faith on their part there is a spiritual reception of him—the revealed word and the personal Christ—in the heart, and thus the actual realization of an eternal life. This is a matter of fact and spiritual experience, sometimes totally inarticulated by the breath of a new-born life in the soul of the believer. We thus do not absolutely need a philosophy of religion, but we need religion. Scientific theology brings unrest, but faith brings peace. The time will come, doubtless, when faith

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<sup>1</sup> Van Oosterzee's "Christian Dogmatics," vol. i. p. 94.

and knowledge shall be perfectly correlated, and when that which is objective shall be one with what is subjective in religion ; but that time is distant. The preacher, as has been often said in these lectures, is, first of all, an interpreter—he is a pure medium. He is not to bring the human thought, the human philosophy, between the heart and the divine word. His own mind is to work upon the original truth, to mould it into teaching forms, to methodize its matter into abstract principles of thought it may be, but mainly he is to interpret it simply and spiritually to men, to render it pure to the people, that they may feed upon the bread of life, so that *to preach primarily from a system of theology instead of primarily from the Word and Spirit of God* is, we cannot but think, a partial and one-sided view.

In regard to the introduction of the argumentative element itself in preaching, none but a man who is totally ignorant of the philosophy of mind would deny its claims. There can be no forcible presentation of truth to the reason which is not itself psychologically rational, or is not based upon a true philosophy of thought. A sermon should have logical, in opposition to illogical, thinking, and requires reasoning, or the giving of reasons, otherwise it would go forth unballasted on the rough and stormy sea of human opinion. Logic, regarded in its highest sense as the science of the process of thought, and as the necessary evolution of the reason, cannot and should not be excluded from the pulpit any more than it should be from education. The study of the classics in this connection, even of Greek particles, commonly held to be dry and unpractical, as showing the connection of thought and how the ancients syllogized, as illustrating the science of reasoning, and the art or philosophy of thought—

**Logic in the  
pulpit.**



this is by no means without its value in training the mind of the preacher to think and reason ; but *formal logic*, which treats of the act of thinking totally aside from any relation to real existence, though it has its uses in philosophy, is out of place in a field of truth where the laws of the forms of knowledge are of little importance compared with the substance and contents of knowledge itself, or the objective reality of divine things ; it seems mockery to bring the barren methods of the schools, the endless and enfeebling analysis of scientific theology, into the pulpit where Christ is preached to sinful men—it is feeding them with husks. Religion is, primarily, faith, love, and obedience, not logic. Religion subjectively, is the sense of dependence upon God, and objectively, the actual re-binding of man in his affections and purposes to God. It necessarily comprehends the intellect, or the reason, and also the will ; but we come to the real possession of the great truths of God, Christ, Eternal Life, not originally through the judgments of the logical understanding, but vitally through the soul's apprehension of them by faith and love, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, through the intuitions of consciousness and of the higher reason and spirit in man. "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." Even the poetic insight of Schiller enabled him to see this when he wrote :

"Allen gehört was du denkst ; dein eigen ist nur was du fühllest,  
Soll er dein Eigenthum sein, fühle den Gott, den du denkst."

Men are often most illogically saved. Dr. Emmons, who preached with a purpose, force, and perspicacity that makes him the model of a sermonizer in these respects, was often borne on by his untempered reasoning into positions and statements from which his better intuition, if he had allowed it to speak, must have revolted. He shunned no

statement that his primary syllogism forced him into. In seeking the logical he forgot the higher rational and synthetic relations of truth ; so that he ran the risk of crushing souls whose moral nature was at all sensitive and just. In this way one may destroy souls logically. In this way logic is weak and superficial. Logic and philosophy may become as unchristian as art may become. The higher truths of faith cannot be philosophically formulated and then forced upon the soul with the hydrostatic pressure of argument. The argument or the soul is shattered by the impact. The postulates of mathematics, so beautiful in their completeness, do not fit the freely undulating surface of spiritual truth. You could as well screw down the Atlantic Ocean with a copper cover. But moral and spiritual truths are nevertheless the proper subject of right reasoning.

Robert South, a highly intellectual though not spiritual preacher, shows us how we may reason with interest and success upon moral subjects, because he did not run into sheer abstractions, but kept his feet on the facts of human nature and experience. He did not strive to go beyond what nature and the Scriptures taught ; he was a sound and robust reasoner ; and yet he is a very poor illustration of what we mean compared with some other greater preachers, and with Emmons himself, when he forgot to be the mere dialectician and became the practical reasoner of the gospel with sinful men.

In all proper discourse there are two main methods of development—the logical and the oratorical, the first being more the method of art and the second of nature ; and in the reasoning of the pulpit the method of art, the formal logic of the schools, is not so fruitful, nor is it always to be preferred to the living modes of persuasion that the higher reason, the imagination and the heart, and above

all, the Spirit of God, teach. The sermon should be dynamic rather than scientific or artistic. It should be a living growth rather than a dead work. The apostle Paul's reasoning (which is often held up as the grand model of argumentative theological preaching) was natural, spiritual, inspirational. It was rhetorical, too, in the best sense of the word. He was an analogical rather than strictly logical reasoner. He was forensic rather than syllogistic. He never uses the syllogistic weapon that Aristotle had already shaped and sharpened to his hand, since he was doubtless more or less conversant with the forms of Greek dialectics. He was too rapid a reasoner and too much in earnest to play with a method which is often but a *petitio principii*. His mind was eminently synthetic rather than eminently analytic. He dealt in concrete forms of truth presented in all their vividness. The "cross of Christ," as he commonly used the phrase, stood to him for all that Christ was, and did, and suffered for man. The "blood of Christ" was the life of such universal and representative value which was poured forth for the sins of the world. There is a train of most powerful and magnificent reasoning in Paul's epistles and addresses, appealing to the understanding as well as to the conscience; but often it is as artless or inartificial as if he loved the truth—which he did—more than the argument. He seizes upon an analogy almost as readily as upon a reason, to bring out his thought. He seems sometimes to despise rigid reasoning. He scatters its serried links to the winds. He is readily taken by the parallelisms of words, by associations of ideas, by swiftly glancing aspects and resemblances of thought that come up in succession from a mightily working intellect and glowing imagination that beheld spiritual truth in all

The Apostle  
Paul's  
reasoning.

things. Thus while in 2 Cor. 9 he is discoursing in an unusually systematic way of the duty of the Church in the matter of giving to the necessity of saints, he suddenly ends the chapter by turning the attention of those whom he addresses to the free and unspeakable gift of God to man—Jesus Christ. The connection of thought in this passage is oratorical rather than logical. In the second chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians he meets the objections of false teachers by proving the great fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead—his actual ascension from the tomb—and then he goes on at once to show by a kind of inspired figure, though full of substance and living truth, that the purely *spiritual* resurrection of Christ from the power of sin and death draws up also his believing followers along with him into his risen life of holiness at the right hand of God. There is in this far more of what old Thomas Fuller calls “the oratory of God which converts souls” than of rigid logic. In this living way which reached the conscience—the “man of the heart”—making Felix tremble as “he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” Paul’s preaching was successful because it had the power and voice of God to the soul in it ; it was apodictic and did not stand in the wisdom of men. He preached Christ as a living power and by the “Spirit of Christ.” Chrysostom said “He converted the world not only by miracles, but by his continual preaching.” It was, in a true sense, doctrinal preaching ; and doctrinal preaching like that of Paul in which is the kernel of the nut, the marrow of the bone, in which is the essence of the wisdom of Christ, the life of the Spirit, is true preaching. The truths of God the Creator, creation, the law, sin, repentance, the incarnation, the atonement, faith, the new birth, righteousness, love, eternal life, the resurrection,



immortality, the judgment and the awards of eternity—these, with their mystery and solemn depth, mingling fear and hope, awe and joy, will always be the themes of Christian preaching, because these truths satisfy the soul. They reach the deepest hunger and trouble of sin. They pacify and cleanse the conscience. They open vistas of light and hope to the higher spirit in man. Natural truths cannot do this; they go no further than nature goes, with the apology that what is higher is unknowable. But Christ makes the supernatural truth both knowable and known; he brings the hidden things of God to light. “Christ and him crucified” is the sum of Pauline preaching, which imparts light, heat, and movement to all. God’s love is here focalized. There can be nothing higher, nothing deeper. Faith in the Christ who died for the life of the world is the way to pardon, purity, and eternal life; and it is well that this central truth of the atonement as the way of righteousness is again becoming the theme of the deepest interest and most intense study, and that new light is streaming in upon what might be called the human-divine side of the nature of Christ, opening fresh and attractive views of this doctrine.

We talk much of “doctrine,” and “doctrinal preaching,” but what, after all, is “doctrine,” but simply that which is “taught” by God’s Word and Spirit? Its speculative sense is an entirely secondary one. Therefore, we aver that it is better and more natural to find that “doctrine,” that “teaching,” in the Scriptures themselves—to press out the contents of inspiration, and present them in their original power and spiritual pungency to the mind, than to dilute them too much by the artificial processes of human dialectics.

Yet let us not be understood as arguing against logic.

President Finney says in his autobiography that a certain district in England, where he was laboring at the time, needed more logical preaching. We do not doubt it. The popular religious intellect, it may be, had been enfeebled by hortatory platitudes or ecclesiastical sentimentalisms from the pulpit, that touched no living interest and aroused no profound thought in men's minds. The logical element in American preaching has imparted to it a strength and a firm consistency that, however it may be lacking in other qualities, perhaps still more important, has, in these respects, made it superior to the English, French, and German pulpits. The logical faculty is needed to try, judge, and establish positive truth. It tests, squares, and lays the stones furnished at its hand. Every mind upon whom the burden of instructing others falls should have the discipline which a severe course of logic affords. The sermons of preachers, especially of beginners, are often woefully deficient in this quality. They could not stand by themselves. They topple over with an adverse breath. Some subjects also absolutely demand logical treatment; and every genuine "discourse" which is carefully arranged according to the rules of art and with a view of producing a particular impression upon the minds of hearers, gains force from a clear plan. Bourdaloue said he could forgive anything but a poor method. We argue only against the claim sometimes set up with dogmatic positiveness that the rigidly logical and theological method is the only productive method in the search and treatment of spiritual truth, and that it is the exclusive mode of reasoning, of persuasion, of converting men to God. Even in the field of revival preaching do we not have a logical Finney and an illogical Moody? We contend for spiritual freedom, for nature, for God's teachings of individual genius, for rhetor-

ical and scriptural variety, for the inspirations and illuminations of the Holy Spirit, for feeling as well as argument, for that love of men which every great preacher must have in his heart which stamps him as a true successor of the apostles, and without which the cold splendors of the intellect play and shine in vain. There is too little of this Pauline sensibility, or, as the French say, "*onction*," in our American preaching, and before we shall see more of it there must be a total revolution wrought in our whole theory of preaching. It must become more truly spiritual; Christ must have a thorough control of the being, mind, and spirit of the preacher. Christ must be his inner life, prompting to utterance. He must draw from those divine fountains of Christ's heart, those hidden inspirational springs that issue from the Holy Spirit through a living faith in that great union of the divine with the human, which was brought about in the incarnation and work of the Son of God, vivifying, deepening, spiritualizing, making divine the affections and energies, and all the outflowings and expressions of the human spirit.

The earliest preachers were spiritual, prophetic, and expository preachers. Chrysostom preached ethical and expository rather than theological discourses. Augustine, though intensely theological in his other writings, is extremely simple and practical in his sermons. Bernard of Clairvaux was almost altogether an exegetical sermonizer. Luther, though his pulpit addresses were full of polemic theology, had also besides this a great human heart, nature, wit, sarcasm, anecdote, allegory, passionate eloquence, and the widest and most intimate use of the Scriptures.

We have thus far spoken of the variety of treatment which subjects of divine truth discussed in the pulpit should have.

We come now, under this general subject of the classification of sermons according to their treatment and form, to say a few words upon the actual *form* of the sermon. While the classification of sermons in this respect has been with all homiletical writers a fruitful one, we have already suggested that the simplest method of classification would be, first, into the textual; secondly, the topical, sometimes called "subject sermons;" third, the textual-topical. A more elaborate classification which was proposed, would regard the form of the sermon as depending upon the manner of treating the text, the manner of treating the subject, and the general rhetorical treatment, and would bring into view the various kinds of textual, topical, expository, doctrinal, ethical, historical, argumentative, meditative, and hortatory sermons; but we will not enter into this wide field, or repeat what has been said on these points, and will notice only, for a moment, the two grand divisions of the textual and the topical forms of sermon.

If we were asked what style of sermonizing should be mainly recommended, not by any means as the exclusive one, but as the most ordinary method of preaching, year in and year out, for a pastor's regular work of instruction from the pulpit, we should answer, that without making it a dry excogitation of the Scriptures, and without bibliolatry—for the Bible itself is but a book, which ought not to be worshipped, and only Him whom it revealed should be adored—the expository should be employed, or, rather, what might be called the "textual" as contrasted with the "topical" style of discourse. We use "textual" here not precisely in its technical sense.

A "textual sermon," technically, is one that follows in



its treatment closely the words of the text, clause by clause and word by word. We would employ "textual" here, rather in the sense of "text preaching," that is, making the text the absolute subject of the sermon, and not an abstract subject evolved from the text ; holding firmly to the text, drawing the real material, the real thought, and the real inspiration from the word of Scripture. It is, in fact, "biblical preaching" instead of "theme preaching." It takes a long time to be emancipated from the tyranny of the topical or theme sermon, which has dominated over our pulpits. This, we grant, has done a great work, and will continue to do so ; the most cultivated audiences are best pleased with it and also profited by it ; but its exclusive use has engendered many errors of preaching, and has sometimes led astray from the true object of preaching. It has, above all, spoiled variety and freedom. Topical preaching, as has been hinted, draws from the text a particular theme, or, what is often the case, takes a topic before taking a text, and makes that topic the subject of the sermon. Here is its unity. It requires an artistic handling, like an oration, or a piece of sculpture. It is a perfect discourse formed upon the rules of art. It is something, after all, outside of the text, though it should be in strict accordance with it. It requires brief texts containing complete themes, and themes capable of didactic development. But this style of sermonizing is very apt to lead to a neglect of the word of God. The sermon, in fact, hangs on the proposition or topic instead of the text ; and how many wrong topics, such as the text never taught, have been drawn out to serve as themes of this kind of sermon ; *e.g.*, by a German preacher, who made the subject of Acts 26 : 24, "Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself ;

Textual  
and topical  
sermons.

much learning hath made thee mad"— "The doubtful and perilous character of religious enthusiasm." A sermon should spring up from the word of God studied within the circle of a minister's pastoral duties, needs, and requirements ; and while sometimes the topic will be suggested before the text (though we think this is not a good rule), and there should be all proper freedom here, since the pastor has two books to study, his Bible and his people ; yet when the text is once chosen, however and whenever done, then it should be treated with honor and thoughtful attention, as the utterance of God upon the specific duty or subject in hand. Topical preaching is needed for the wants and emergencies of the pulpit, and will continue in vogue, and all will follow it who aim at a high standard of scientific excellence in sermonizing, but uniformly pursued it will present the human side of preaching predominantly, will hide Christ, and injure the cause of Christian truth ; and a return to nature, to biblical preaching, to the teachings of the "Spirit of Christ," will constitute a real reform.

Textual preaching, in the sense in which we have explained it, where the text forms the actual basis of discourse and is immediately and mainly treated of, enables the preacher to interpret the Word of God more closely ; which course is in harmony with the main theory already advanced, that preaching is primarily interpretation—interpretation not of a dead but living sort, adapted to spiritual awakening and persuasion. It also enables the preacher to employ texts that comprise longer or shorter portions of Scripture, and this is the beauty of this method, that the texts may be longer, and thus embrace a wider range of truth, like the parables of our Lord, or like the extended figures in the 15th chapter of Luke, 1 Cor. 9 : 24-27, Eph. 6 : 14-17 ; or narrative and historical

texts ; or texts containing some important subject fully treated, as 1 Cor. 13, and Mark 10 : 33-50 where humility is the underlying lesson of the whole passage ; or meditative texts, as many of the Psalms, in which the inmost religious life of the writer is set forth. The textual discourse honors the word of God by thus keeping near to it and dwelling ever upon it. It gradually develops the riches of the text, following it out in its details, not perhaps running into a formal proposition and argument, but at the same time not disregarding the ground truth of the passage (*das inneres Factum*), the essential unity of the thought, the broad generalization which comprehends the whole. It has a true subject, which may be usually defined by some general title, such as "The Centurion's Faith," "The Healing of the Blind Man," "The Golden Rule," "The New Commandment." Thus the teaching is brought directly out of the Scriptures in an original way, in all its spiritual power, with nothing, as it were, of human invention intervening between the living word and the living hearts of men. This is apt to be edifying preaching, feeding souls upon the bread of life. This kind of preaching, mixing in with it the topical, so that the sermon shall partake of the synthetic as well as analytic character, is a profitable form of sermonizing. This was F. W. Robertson's usual way of preaching. While we would thus strongly urge a return to biblical preaching, as coming back again to the living springs of power, as being the most spiritual as well as the most ancient form of pulpit address, continuing until, in the fourth and fifth centuries, Greek speculation and rhetoric began to destroy the free exposition of Scripture and the inartificial style of interlocutory address or homily, and to mould the discourse upon the formal principles of Greek art, yet

we would not be understood as denying art and philosophy their proper place in the sermon.

Thought implies art. Emerson says, "The conscious utterance of thought by speech or action, to any end, is art." As Christian truth meets the advance

Art  
and literary  
power  
in sermons.

of civilization and the needs of occidental thought, it assumes, doubtless, to a certain extent, the forms of cultivated thought. It may do this if it does not depend upon this method for success. A mind of severe philosophical culture, like that of F. W. Robertson, is apt to get at the heart of a subject and the heart of a hearer more readily than a half-educated man can do. Perhaps also, as a matter of secondary moment, there is greatly needed in our modern sermons the interest of *fresh thought*. Originality, says Goethe, is clothing old truths in a new garb. Beauty is ever new while truth is old. Nature may sometimes be ugly, but she has infinite variety, and the desert itself, to a scientific or æsthetic eye, is never utterly uninteresting and unprofitable. The pulpit of the present day has more formidable rivals than perhaps it ever had. The book, the review, the lecture, even the daily newspaper, constantly dazzle by their bright discoveries and new ideas. If preachers cannot learn to write in the same vigorous and idiomatic English style, teeming with fresh thoughts—the food of the intellectual hunger of this age—that Tyndall and Darwin and Huxley employ, how can they compete with these men? Not, assuredly, by repeating and indorsing all their philosophy; but that preachers can compete even with such brilliant men upon their own ground, considering the subject solely on this literary plane, our own New England prince of preachers, Dr. Bushnell, is a striking example. Power despises criticism, and there was certainly



native as well as spiritual power in this man beyond his art. His "faith-talent" alone (to use his own phrase) surpassed his literary and intellectual gifts, brilliant as they were ; and in fact it is a question whether so strong and original a genius as his could have developed to its full perfection unless it had burst its way through the rigid conditions of a particular school of religious thought. But he took old, biblical, common truth, and made it luminous in his intense realization of it.

He spoke to earnest, honest minds, whether educated or illiterate, because he pierced beneath the surface of the accidental and touched the real man, the common reason, conscience, and heart. He was great enough to be popular, and yet, like Robertson, he despised popularity, and restrained himself from saying anything because it was popular ; breasting the tide of public opinion like a strong swimmer. His childlike delight in God's works and his susceptibility to the poetry of the natural world into whose spiritual symbolism his prophetic insight penetrated, took whatever he said out of commonplace and stamped it with fresh beauty. He helped to unbind the imagination and to give freedom and play to the æsthetic faculty in the Puritan pulpit. One spark of God and nature is enough to give the preacher power. Dr. Bushnell had broad views of his great office as an interpreter of the " Word." The whole world was to him a thought of God, was full of God and of his ideas, so that he could not close his eyes to anything that was divine in the world, or in man, or in literature (which is the soul of man embodied in thought), or in art, which is the study of the beauty, rhythm and harmony of God's mind. Should not every man, he held, be a Milton if he could be one ? Should not every man be a Michael Angelo if he could be one ? Should not every man be a Paul, or

a John, if he could be one? He had no petty views of the preacher's work. He set to it no narrow and conventional metes and bounds, but regarded it as the highest and most comprehensive calling in the world—the work of reading the mind and love of the infinite “Word,” and teaching these to men, so that they should love, obey, and grow themselves Christlike. His creative imagination that made all things new; his knowledge of living facts and of men, his mastery of the hidden sources of language wherein it is tropical, emotional, original, were brought to bear in the pulpit. He discomfited, as by a stroke of lightning, the demon of sermonic dulness. How could he be dull with such bold originality, such scope of illustration, such “sweetness and light” springing from his inner spiritual life, such a hearty and manful sympathy with truth and with the struggles of other minds in their search after truth? He confessedly sought truth before orthodoxy, preferring the unfading crown of God to the withering crown made by men's hands. Thus while he preached on the most lofty and supernatural themes he brought to his feet unbelievers, doubters, humanitarians, nothingarians, hard intellects, worldly and wicked men, as well as holy men and believers. He convinced them that there was something divine in this gospel that he preached. His large liberality, caught from communion with the spirit of Christ, took away the arguments of sceptics; and the minds of men were astonished and overwhelmed and borne down with the resistless force, the gracious magnanimity, and the celestial majesty of the truth he uttered. Who can say that the pulpit has lost power with thoughtful men, let them be of what cast of philosophical opinion they may, when such preachers as Bushnell, and Robertson, and Schleiermacher, and Lacordaire, have lived and spoken,

and the air is still vibrant with their nervous words? Yet these men did not speak, we believe, merely to be eloquent—*ad complendas aures*. They obeyed the impulse of a deeper inspiration. Some of the best models of sermons, in a purely literary point of view, that combine this fresh thinking with a free, strong, natural, and at the same time exquisitely moulded literary style—satisfying the highest taste and yet open as the day to the uncultured mind—are those of J. H. Newman before their true light was confused and obscured by the sombre and unprogressive ecclesiasticism of the Romish Church.

In this connection, and as having also a great deal to do with the form of sermonizing, we would remark that the development of *science* adds a new element of power to the enlightened pulpit of this day, because the knowledge of the laws and facts of the natural world increases our knowledge of God. In a scientific age preaching takes more or less of a scientific form. The preacher of light should gladly welcome every opening of the great volume of facts which God has written in the physical universe. “There is no rest possible for man in nescience, in negation. He needs a rock and not the pivot of a balance to sustain him.” The relation of the pulpit with science is, to our mind, a theme promising much of novel interest and profound value. The preacher should rejoice in this revival and mighty stir of scientific thought, in whose troubled waters he can cast his line; since the most violent disturbance is better than stagnation in regard to knowledge, whether spiritual or material. He should prove to the world that the Christian Church possesses an intellectual vigor equal to all demands made upon it, and that it is able to cope with living problems. He, the follower of truth, ought to cultivate a

Science  
in the pulpit.

catholic mind which is hospitable to new ideas, nor should he look with a narrow jealousy upon the advance of science, since science is but the formal recognition of proven knowledge. That is true science which presents to us facts which are the fruits of induction, and are capable of proof and logical classification, of exact statement, in whatever field of knowledge the pursuit may be. The truth of revelation cannot be imperilled by the progress of true science ; and, moreover, as the two do not, as a general rule, move in the same plane, it is lost time spent in trying to reconcile science and the Bible. At the same time, the spirit of inquiry which develops the laws of the natural universe, while it narrows the domain of superstition, facilitates the interpretation of God's moral and spiritual manifestation of himself in his word and in human consciousness ; not willingly always, for the labors of some modern scientists are like the strokes of giants guided by a higher intelligence than their own, so that they build better than they know. But in spite of the atheistic intent impelling their activity, and in spite of their stopping in the material world, which furnishes no explanation of force, mind, and spirit, they are none the less the authors of spiritual light. They are men of bright intelligence, essentially of the light. They should be regarded with gratitude and with patient hope as co-laborers in the field of truth. Take even the much-berated Darwinian theory, for example, has it not already widened our vision of physical knowledge ? It is but one phase of the problem of creation, which has regard mainly to the mode of divine causation, and is consistent with a divine theory of the universe. It denies, it is true, the necessity of a new creative act in the production of new species, but relegates all to an original power impressed upon nature, which, through the working of certain



change-producing laws, is sufficient to account for the formation of species and the progress of the race without further intervention of creative power. It thus denies the action of blind force, and asserts the uniform reign of law. It has seized upon a certain great truth of cosmic development, of the existence of the working influence of law, of the evolution of higher out of lower forms, of the principle of orderly progress in creation which has long ago been observed, but never before so clearly emphasized and reduced to scientific analysis. It seems as if heretofore we had simply taken the truth of creation—that God created the universe—and were satisfied with that, perhaps wisely so ; now the Darwinian scientist searches under this grand truth into the modes of creation, and is not this legitimate ? Through his guidance we seem to be catching glimpses of one of those simple laws, like that of gravitation, upon which God invariably works—the law of evolution in the creation of the forms of organic life. We catch here and there fragments of this great law, if law it be. At enormous intervals we seem to see through the mist of past ages the substantial evidence of a creative plan or law of evolution. But it is as yet fragmentary. It is unestablished and unproved. Darwinism, by the confession of its most credible teachers, cannot, upon its admitted principles, account for all the facts of the universe. It is, therefore, open to doubt. While there is much in its favor, there is a great deal to be said upon the other side. There is so much to be said, that Darwinism, technically speaking, *may be entirely untrue*. Nevertheless it is deserving of a candid and patient hearing, especially from the theologian, who is more deeply interested in it than any man outside of the pure scientist ; and while we believe that the Darwinian theory, technically speaking, has as yet failed to

establish its proofs, that the missing links have not been found, that the fathomless gaps which separate lower from higher life, which separate life from no life, have not been bridged over, we think that the arguments against Darwin's view sometimes exhibit an inexcusable want of thorough appreciation of what his theory of ontology is ; and many of the replies made to scientific doubt by theologians and preachers are injudicious, often weak. They evince timidity as well as ignorance. Scientific infidelity should be met by scientific knowledge, not only knowledge of the facts of the natural universe but of archæology and of a true historic criticism. Is not everything aiding the elucidation of truth, from the revelations of the highest physical science, the remarkable facts of ethnological research, and the brilliant era in philological investigation, to the last Egyptian discovery or broken fragment of cuneiform inscription from new-risen Chaldea and Assyria ? The battle may be hard, but there is no doubt of the result where the gospel of hope contends against the gospel of despair. Protestantism and true science are one.

The pulpit of this age, in order to meet its wants, must be, as has already been said, to a certain extent scientific ; for the scientific statement of truth is the most exact statement, and the inductive and scientific is healthfully corrective of the ultra tendencies of the metaphysic and deductive method. Science and religion may be of mutual help to each other, for the one searches the causes of natural phenomena, the other the cause of causes—"science is nature revealed, while religion is nature's God revealed." The Christian pulpit has always claimed the liberty to discuss scientific questions where they cross lines of revelation, having an example in the apostle Paul, who suggests in his discourse

at Athens the necessity and mode of meeting philosophic denial, as he met the atomic theory of the Epicureans which has come around again in our day—by kindness, wise firmness, and an intelligent presentation of the truth, so congenial to human reason, of a personal Creator. The preacher must be willing to come down from the region of abstractions to meet error in the concrete forms of a materialistic philosophy, which is the present phase of denial. Pure theism is a proposition which can be defended scientifically as well as metaphysically, without dogmatism and unchristian bitterness, and with the very weapons that science herself so liberally furnishes. Already those who have lived a quarter of a century in the thinking world have seen great scientific names—even such a name as that of John Stuart Mill—waning with the theories belonging to them, which theories, though now subsided, we are willing thankfully to confess have left behind them much good and enrichment, with the devastation they have occasioned.

The extreme limits of atheistic principles which have been already attained indicate a reaction to a sounder philosophy, a more rational and truly scientific theory of being. This the pulpit, with a divinely nurtured intelligence, should aid, as something correlated to its higher aim and work; since, in one sense, the kingdom of spirit is built up from beneath by such means; and we have been of the opinion that Christian thought has heretofore ignored too much the importance of those lower physical and material facts which have their influence upon the gradual improvement of the race by the harmonious working of physical and moral laws; but we would in no sense depend upon scientific culture, any more than upon philosophic and literary culture for the power of

the pulpit—if we do God sends his prophets in the guise of herdsmen and coal miners to break the illusion—but at the same time Luther himself did not despise the aids of learning, literature, art, and eloquence, and if he had lived in these days he would joyfully have hailed science also as a handmaid of Christian persuasion, while he would have despised it as compared with the power of a spiritual faith, of a living Christ.

In the forms of the sermon, in the modes of presenting divine truth to the people, therefore, we contend for a generous and wholesome breadth of treatment, taking in the whole nature of man ; for absolute freedom within the true sphere of the Christian preacher ; for a cheerful hope in humanity ; for the use of every genuine method of persuasion and every form of effective address which nature, true sympathy, and the Spirit of God teach.

In concluding these remarks upon the general subject of the classification of sermons according to their treatment and form, and the discussion of the best forms of preaching, the suggestion would be in place that some regular course of pulpit instruction is advisable—something

A general  
plan in  
preaching.

like a plan that embraces a long period, perhaps a season, or a year ; like the method of orderly reading and expounding the Scriptures in the English, German, and Lutheran churches ; in fact the system of “ the Christian year.” A campaign, carefully planned beforehand in all its details, sometimes shows astonishing results, as seen in the Prussian part of the German-French war. The very lines of operation that were laid down in the silence of the study months before were strictly followed out, and the enemy was forced to do just what his more prescient adversary had marked out for him to do. We do not believe in quite such a rigid system of operation in the spirit-



ual field, but certainly a comprehensive intelligence should preside over it, and on beginning his work, and beginning every new year of his ministry, the preacher would do well to have some clear idea of what he is intending to do, and what should be the style, method, and aim of his preaching, whether it should be doctrinal or practical, of a revival or didactic character, governed often by the character and wants of the people, by the changing seasons of the year, and, above all, by the guidings and movings of the Holy Spirit.

We would reiterate the recommendation already made, that, under the condition that the purpose of preaching is right, that it is unselfishly aimed at the spiritual good of the hearers, that it is the truth as it is in Jesus, the greater variety that the preacher can give to his style and form of sermonizing the better. As has been hinted, every sermon should exhibit this variety; it should not be exclusively doctrinal without the practical element, nor should it be entirely practical without the doctrinal and didactic element. Our modern revivals, it is said, reach the great middle classes of society; but they do not reach the two extremes—the intellectual or the working classes. But preaching should be such that all should be reached. For a man to preach exclusively sermons addressed to the logical understanding, is like feeding a child upon only one kind of food; he must sometimes preach some sermons addressed more exclusively to the affections—hortatory and awakening sermons. Historical sermons and sermons especially upon the life of our Lord, with their multitude of lessons to the present time and to the universal soul of man—truly Christian discourses—are very interesting as well as enriching. There should be this attractive element of

**Variety in  
preaching.**

variety in sermonizing ; a discourse on the application of the Christian principle to political economy now and then interposed among discourses of a more purely religious character, might lead some minds to enlarged views of duty and new apprehensions of the responsibility of citizenship. But it seems to us extremely unfortunate when a preacher runs on an iron track of sermonizing—let it be a theological style of preaching, where the sermon is but the reproduction of theological treatises ; or a sentimental style of preaching, where sermons are little more than pathetic illustrations and picture-drawing ; or moralizing preaching, where the sermon never rises into the heights and glories of the supernatural truth. And we would even say that a preacher may dwell too much and too long in the supernatural regions of thought, so that he himself shall become a kind of spiritualized essence, dehumanized and bloodless, sublimated beyond human feelings and passions, and having no power to come down to the wants, interests, and sympathies of living men. Such a man ought to be put in a glass case and enshrined on the top of the steeple. Let us return to biblical preaching and then we will get this variety. Let us have a simpler and more primitive and apostolic style of instruction, drawn freshly from the Scriptures of God's truth, and from nature. The preacher is called upon to exercise constantly his best invention, the genius God has given him, to introduce an interesting and healthful style of sermonizing addressed to all classes. Let him adapt divine truth to the real wants of his hearers, studying those wants. Let him not strike ever the same chord that renders back a terrible and gloomy tone—sin and perdition—solemn truth ; but is this the only string of divine harmonious truth that the gospel has ? Let him not, on the other hand, see noth-

ing but the hopeful side and dare not draw the dark picture, so that his preaching lacks shadow, background, and power. Let him not in like manner deal with the metaphysic and philosophic dogma till he dries up the fountains of his hearers' hearts as with the breath of a desert-wind; neither let him dwell so entirely in the busy, unreasoning present of fact, that thinking minds are not helped in their metaphysical and philosophical difficulties, and do not get to the foundations of truth, rationally speaking. Here, then, is scope afforded for the best talent, the most fruitful invention, the boldest imagination, the keenest study of human nature, and the most active, growing spiritual knowledge and faith.

SEC. 21. *Classification of Sermons according to their method of delivery.*

From the fact that the manner of delivery shapes the conception and plan of the sermon, and bears directly upon the whole object and design of preaching, a course of lectures upon Homiletics would be imperfect which did not give careful attention to this subject; and so great is its importance in a practical point of view, that we have reserved it for the last place, where indeed it logically belongs.

We sometimes listen to thoughtless flings against theological seminaries that the art of oratory is not cultivated at the present day by them.

It would be more proper to charge modern civilization itself with a neglect of the rhetorical art which was once considered to be, as in the old Greek state, the crown of a liberal education. Many causes might be adduced for this; but while the charge against theological seminaries is not an entirely just one, and while we venture to say

that at this moment more attention is paid in our best theological schools to oratory, than in the colleges, law schools, or other educational and professional institutions of the land, much more should be done. Theological schools, instead of bending all their aim to make learned theologians, should, while doing this, make their pre-eminent object the turning out of effective preachers. All their instruction, of whatever kind, should aim at this.

The Christian orator in the pulpit, as he has the noblest field, so he should have the loftiest ideal of the orator, the "great orator," who, Quintilian said, "had not yet appeared, but who would appear hereafter, and who would be as consummate in goodness as in eloquence." The age of the Reformation was a period of marked eloquence in the pulpit. Concerning the eloquence of Calvin, Farel, and Viret, an epigram of Theodore de Beza is recorded, to this effect, that "Never one showed more learning than Calvin; never one thundered with more force than Farel; never one spake with more honied sweetness than Viret." Luther and Zwingli laid the foundations of the Reformation in the eloquence as well as spiritual fire and faith of their preaching.

The European Protestant Church has always cultivated the oratorical art, and in France especially it has rivalled the senate and the bar as well as the academic chair, in the purity, grace, and finished elegance of its oratory. Coquerel says that "Religion imposes this upon itself; even the highest truth is not self-evident to the beclouded and corrupt mind, but needs to be explained, proved, and established. It must be recommended to men with all the energies of the soul, all the faculties of the intellect, all the resources of oratory. One can never plead for religion with too much eloquence, and no preacher is excused, if he has received from God any good gift,



any quality that belongs to the orator, such as memory, voice, facile elocution, presence of mind, easy and natural gesticulation, an expressive countenance, and a piercing glance, above all, power of thought and forceful expression—he is culpable in not training these powers to the highest perfection in the service of his Master.”<sup>1</sup>

Coquerel regrets that preaching has been excluded from the domain of literature. He points to Massillon, who worked over his sermons ten years before publishing them; and he recommends the establishment of institutions like that at Augsburg, called a “*Prediger-Seminar*,” where the sole aim is to fit young men to be preachers.

The modes of delivery have greatly influenced the oratorical power of the pulpit; they have increased or diminished it in a marked degree, both in respect of periods and individuals. Let us then look at this point, and we now proceed to notice the classification of sermons, especially in regard to their methods of delivery. This classification would divide sermons into three kinds (though these methods may sometimes be combined in one), viz. :

Written sermons, or those delivered from written notes; Memoriter sermons, or those recited from memory; and Extemporaneous sermons.

#### 1. Written sermons.

This method is not without its great names in the pulpit.

Who would find fault with the preaching of such a man as Horace Bushnell in his prime, when the manuscript before him seemed to vanish, and he soared above it, and above all art, by the force of his strong thinking, and the inspiration of a divine and expanding theme?

Written  
sermons.

<sup>1</sup> “*Observations Pratiques sur la Prédication*,” p. 264.

Dr. Chalmers, that pulpit-monarch, was also a preacher of written sermons. Van der Palm, the most eloquent preacher of Holland in modern times, pursued this plan. This method, we conclude, must still continue to be practised by those who, if they should die for it, can neither speak from memory nor off-hand. The preaching of written sermons will not be abandoned in haste. But still, it should be remembered, that this was not the method of the first preachers.

They were free men in speech, if but children often in knowledge. "All the examples of Christian antiquity and of the beginnings of the Reformation are against the practice of the reading of written sermons. Neither Basil nor Chrysostom, neither Augustine, nor Luther, nor Calvin, nor their contemporaries, read their discourses, and later down this method never prevailed in French churches, and is now renounced almost entirely."<sup>1</sup>

**Not the  
ancient  
method.**

In Germany the use of written sermons has never prevailed. In Holland, about fifty years since, it was the custom ; but it is now given up, and this is true to a great extent in Scotland. Its introduction into England, where, together with New England and America it has most prevailed, has been sometimes ascribed to Archbishop Tillotson ; but Bishop Burnet gives a more reliable account of the manner in which it came into vogue in England. He says, in substance, speaking of the Middle Ages, that preaching had been restricted to Lent, at other seasons only to festival days, panegyrics of martyrs, etc. The friars, seeing danger ahead, felt that they must use the instrumentality of preaching to ward off the influences of advancing reformed ideas. Thus "by passionate and

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<sup>1</sup> Coquerel's "Observations Pratiques," p. 175.

affecting discourse" they kindled the devotion of the people toward shrines and pilgrimages, and in this way filled their coffers.

The reformers, on the other hand, saw the value of this instrumentality, but they at first used it indiscreetly. They indulged in highly controversial and acrimonious preaching, which, responded to in the same vein, produced complaints to the king, and after that preaching was confined to the reading of written discourses.<sup>1</sup>

But this practice was not adopted by the later reformers of the English Church, and was really revived by the Puritans ; so much so that it was considered a Puritan innovation, and hence the proclamation of Charles II., October 8th, 1674, to the University of Cambridge, forbidding, on pain of his Majesty's displeasure, the practice of reading sermons, as one " which took its beginnings from the disorders of the times," and which was characterized as " a supine and slothful" method. But the practice had gained too strong a foothold, and has maintained its ground ever since in England, where, at the present time, not one preacher in ten extemporizes, perhaps not one in twelve ; very few memorize ; but the preaching is from pretty full notes or entirely written sermons. Thus this mode did not come in till after the Reformation, and has led, as we have said, to the decline of pulpit eloquence.

Sydney Smith's witty gibes were directed especially against this method of preaching in England. " Pulpit discourses," he says, " have insensibly dwindled from speaking to reading ; a practice of itself sufficient to stifle every germ of eloquence. It is only by the fresh feelings of the heart, that mankind can be profitably

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<sup>1</sup> Burnet's " Hist. of the Reformation of the Ch. of England."

affected. What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation and fervor of a week old ; turning over whole pages of violent passion written out in fair text ; reading the tropes and apostrophes into which he is hurried by the ardor of his mind ; and so affected at a preconcerted line and page, that he is unable to proceed any further ? The great object of modern sermons is to hazard nothing ; their characteristic is decent debility ; which alike guards their authors from hideous errors, and precludes them from striking beauties."

It cannot at the same time be denied that this method has some advantages.

(1.) The written sermon admits of and calls for a thorough treatment of the subject. It does not allow the loose, inconsequential method of thought often found in the false extemporaneous style, when, as an old preacher said of himself, " if he was persecuted in one text he might flee into another ;" but it demands, especially in pulpits of a highly educated community, careful treatment of the theme and precise and well-considered statements.

**Advantage  
of written  
sermon.**

(2.) It secures a more finished style. There is indeed great temptation to run into the literary and essay, instead of the direct oratorical, style in the written discourse ; but he who writes out his thoughts fully is forced to pay some attention to his style ; and he who never writes out his sermons, if he do not specially guard against this tendency, will be in danger of losing his power of accurate writing. Writing makes a clear and rich style.

" The remedy of sterile reverie is the pen. State down every attainment in your thinking by a verbal proposi-



tion. The thing of emphasis is the propositional form. We never have the full use of language as an instrument of thought, unless we cause our thoughts to fall in an assertory shape." The familiar advice of Cicero, in the First Book of the "De Oratore," is, "*Caput autem est . . . quam plurimum scribere. Stilus optimus et præstantissimus dicendi effector ac magister. . . . Ipsa collatio conformatioque verborum perficitur in scribendo, non poetico, sed quodam oratorio numero et modo.*" Professor Shepard, in his discourse on the "Congregational Pulpit," preached at the annual meeting of the American Congregational Union, in 1857, makes these strong remarks: "We insist, then, that we are not to cease following the fathers in a fervid use of the pen, more or less, in connection with preparing for the pulpit. Some of them, doubtless, placed too much reliance on it. Some come under a servile bondage to it. But it does not follow from this that our wisdom consists in throwing it wholly away. We have said that some of these writers for the pulpit proved themselves as among the most effective that ever stood there. They made men see the truth, believe, it, confess it, and be Christians. They made them thinkers, reasoners, orators. The sage of Franklin was the teacher of logic to lawyers. The greatest mathematician of the age was the product of that pulpit; at any rate, he sprang out from before it. In the light of our history we pronounce the clamor raised in some quarters against all writing for the pulpit a miserably shallow and most senseless clamor. The pulpit cannot maintain its moulding efficacy, its ruling position, unless the men thereof are men of the sturdy pen, as well as of the nimble tongue. People, take them as they rise, are greatly given to be lazy; hard thinking is hard work, and lazy men won't do it if they can help it. Let the

mere off-hand be the mode and the law, and we shall have mere flippant, off-hand, extemporaneous dribble. It will answer for exhortation, but not for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. There are discourses which ought to be made, but cannot be made in this way ; crises, wants, demands, which cannot be wholly met in this (extemporaneous) way."

Certainly funeral and occasional discourses, and meditative sermons, cannot possibly be constructed in this off-hand way.

(3.) It assists the preacher in many practical ways. The written method gives him a feeling of confidence. He is sure of having something to say. He is relieved from anxiety in this respect ; and he can give all his powers to an effective delivery. Then, too, he accumulates a preaching-capital of sermons for future use. These are like well-filled barrels in the cellar that the house-master thinks of with complacency in view of hard times to come.

An American clergyman who died a quarter of a century ago left three thousand neatly and perfectly composed sermons ; which, it must be said, however, though a celebrated preacher in his day, have not been disturbed since that time.

As to the actual working of this method of preaching, it cannot be denied that reading from notes is apt, without great and constant care, to lead into radi-

**Disadvantages** cal faults.

of the  
written  
sermon.

(1.) It tends to an indolent and monotonous style of preaching.

We have quoted from Sydney Smith, and we would quote a sentence or two more, premising that what he says does not pointedly apply to American preaching :

" Preaching has become a by-word for long and dull

address of any kind ; and whoever wishes to imply in any piece of writing, the absence of anything agreeable and inviting calls it 'a sermon.' To this cause of the unpopularity of sermons may be added the extremely ungraceful manner in which they are delivered. The English people, generally remarkable for doing very good things in a very bad manner, seem to have reserved the maturity and plenitude of their awkwardness for the pulpit. A clergyman clings to his velvet cushion with either hand, keeps his eye riveted upon his book (notes), speaks of the ecstasies of joy and fear with a voice and a face which indicate neither, and pinions his body and soul into the same attitude of limit and thought, for fear of being called theatrical and affected." . . . "Why are we natural everywhere but in the pulpit? No man expresses warm and animated feelings anywhere else, with his mouth alone, but with his whole body ; he articulates with every limb, and talks from head to foot with a thousand voices. Why this holoplexia on sacred occasions alone? Why call in the aid of paralysis to piety? Is it a rule of oratory to balance the style against the subject, and to handle the most sublime truths in the dullest language and the driest manner? Is sin to be taken from man as Eve was from Adam, by casting them into a deep sleep?"

(2.) Unless guarded against, the use of written sermons also weakens the native power of thought, as well as of delivery. One becomes so habituated to the use of the pen that he cannot think without writing, which is a real loss of power.

(3.) The loss of time in the mechanical process of writing and copying, to the detriment of study.

The chief things to be guarded against in this method are :

(a.) Against mere reading.

The main difficulty in employing this method is to avoid the idea of writing and delivering the written discourse as

if it were a literary production to be read instead of an address to be spoken. Many contend that writing must be read and not spoken ; that it is a virtual deception to attempt to speak it. Thus Coquerel says, " If one reads in the pulpit, it is better read openly and boldly, taking no other pains than to have the manuscript easily legible and properly smoothed down on the front of the pulpit ; then to turn the leaves without affecting a disguise which is useless and unbecoming. We may be certain that the hearers are not deceived in this respect ; they always know when the orator is reading."

Dr. Chalmers also warned his pupils against the custom of mingling reading with free speaking, but recommends that preaching should be either one or the other. Nevertheless, if there be an earnest man in the pulpit, who is resolved that his audience shall be affected by the truth, and whose own mind is possessed by the truth, we believe there is a possibility, even with a written discourse, of the preacher's rising above mere reading into something like genuine address, suffering the manuscript to be before him rather as a guide than a restraint. This depends upon the preacher's theory of the sermon, whether he regards it as a means to an end or a means in itself ; whether it is a living word or a written composition ; whether his preaching is to end in pen, ink, and paper, or in the hearts, souls, and lives of men. But we are assuredly less robust than our ancestors ; and sometimes (by no means always, for many of the best and stoutest-hearted men in the world are in the pulpit) the clergyman who goes forth complacently on Sunday morning, armed and equipped



with his nicely written discourse, is about as near to Martin Luther groaning with his message to the people, or John Knox burning with his prophetic fire, or Hugh Latimer who charged Henry VIII. to his face with adultery, as is a child playing to be a soldier with a wooden weapon compared to a long-sworded moss-trooper, hero of a hundred fights. One cannot strike hard who is encumbered by this paper armor. Some who are older and cannot readily learn new ways may find it difficult and even impossible to free themselves from the bondage to written sermons, but young men should take heed in time.

(b.) Against a poorly prepared manuscript.

Be careful to have the manuscript in a good condition, and to be perfectly familiar with it. The preacher, by skillful management, by gaining a thorough familiarity with his notes (having them written out in a clear, large, bold hand), and by becoming in some measure independent of the manuscript, and rising above it—by filling his mind with the subject-matter—may perhaps be able, in the delivery of the written sermon, to do away almost entirely with the impression that it is not, in form at least, a spontaneous discourse. But the usual awkward and confused manner of reading written discourses is unendurable. He who has good sight and good memory should deliver his sermon standing erect, and looking at the people, so that they can look into his eyes, and he into theirs, and as if he had no shred of manuscript before him. To see a preacher of the free gospel with his head continually bent over his sermon, and tied down to his manuscript, as if there were no living audience before him, is certainly a most pitiable spectacle.

This familiarity with the manuscript is indeed indispensable to success in using written sermons.

If one's time is occupied in catching at the sense of

the written page, what opportunity is left for the delivery? The mechanical effort nullifies the spiritual power. The mind is on the manuscript, not on the congregation. It is taken up with the gun, not fixed on the mark. How can the speaker powerfully impress his own feelings and ideas on an audience, when he is laboriously grappling with the difficulties of rescuing his ideas from the unfamiliar page of written characters before him? He is a slave to the letter, bound hand and foot. He cannot speak freely. To do this he must have obtained previous mastery of his manuscript. Every heading, division, word, should be so familiar that a glance recalls the whole, a word a sentence, a sentence a paragraph, a paragraph a division.

Then he breaks his chain and rises superior to his manuscript, and speaks with something of the freedom and power of an extemporaneous speaker. In no other way can he do this. For though it be true that the man behind the manuscript is the great thing and that the earnest preacher will always be effective, whatever mode he adopts, yet if any method in itself have positive drawbacks and essential disadvantages, he is bound to consider these, and either guard effectually against them, or adopt an entirely different way of preaching.

(c.) Against repeating old sermons.

Do not repeat a written sermon without re-writing or, at least, re-thinking it. A preacher of old sermons in Oxford is called an "Oxford hack," and when he attempts to make an old sermon new by giving it a new text and a little refurbishing, it is "an Oxford hack with a new saddle and bridle."<sup>1</sup>

In respect of old sermons the matter of the sermon

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<sup>1</sup> Cox's "Recollections of Oxford," p. 224.

may be as good and fresh as ever, but all will agree that the feeling in which the sermon is produced should be also fresh. There ought to be something new in every sermon, because there is some new development of experience, thought, or feeling in ourselves in regard to the same old and yet ever new truth that we treat.

In repeating written sermons, it is too much the habit of preachers to snatch up at the last moment, for an exchange, or for a second preaching, a manuscript sermon, without studying it carefully. Every sermon preached, whether written or unwritten, whether preached the first or the fortieth time, should be a fresh discourse. There should be not only an intellectual, but a spiritual reproduction of the sermon; it should be thought out afresh; it should be re-created; it should be prayed over and breathed upon by the same intense feeling as that in which it was composed. It is seldom, indeed, that an old sermon does not need correction and improvement, and even re-writing; for one may have gained new thoughts and experiences on the same subject; and at all events, none will dispute that every sermon preached should bear a fresh coinage—if repeated it should be re-minted.

## 2. Memoriter sermons.

Memoriter speaking has in its favor the example of the ancient orators, and, in all probability, of Demosthenes, who did not trust himself without a careful and even verbal preparation. The memory was regarded as almost the greatest of intellectual gifts for the orator, as Quintilian says, "It is not without reason that the memory has been called the treasury of eloquence." This style has also in its favor the example of a few distinguished English preachers, and of the German and French pulpit as a body.

**Memoriter  
sermons.**

A French writer says : “ By memorization one escapes from the sudden imprudences, the irreparable mistakes and failures of a juvenile extemporization. As to the objection that memorization gives to the delivery something of constraint, of formality, of overstrained emphasis, an affected gesture, a redundant accent, and that extemporization, on the contrary, draws with it a delivery more natural, fervent, and sympathetic ; examples militate against the justice of these alternatives ; if the memory is only sure of itself the elocution does not incur these reproaches, while the delivery of an extemporaneous discourse may be as confused as the discourse itself.”

De Ravignan recommends it as the only proper method, and he repeats a saying of Massillon, “ My best sermon is the one I know best.” He drew from this the conclusion that we ought to know some sermons by heart, and added :

“ I know very well the trouble of learning by heart ; but the more trouble the better—trouble is just what we ought to have. This wretched fear of taking trouble it is that does all the harm. Would you like me to tell you something, of the truth of which I am deeply convinced ? Sloth is what chiefly palsies talent and hinders success. I remember a very sensible remark made to me by a speaker of experience ; he said that we must let a speech rot, yes, *rot* in the memory. Beware of losing the power of learning by heart ; nothing can supply that want.”

Such preachers as De Ravignan, Lacordaire, and Père Hyacinthe, who, whatever their errors, would be called great orators, and who made the Gothic pulpit of Notre Dame resplendent in these modern days, were memoriter preachers ; but it must be said that Notre Dame is a metropolitan show-pulpit, where a display of eloquence was expected ; yet, as a general rule, French and Ger-



man preachers, both Catholic and Protestant, among them Adolphe Monod, Athanase Coquerel, Vinet, and above all, Reinhard, in the last century, held that any other kind of preaching than the memoriter was inefficient, indolent, and unworthy of the occasion and the truth.

By this method, as the example of these eminent preachers proves, the sermon being written out is apt to be carefully composed ; the written style thus intended for delivery is better adapted to speaking, and whatever is stiff is taken out of it ; and if one can overcome the fear of breaking down much is gained in accuracy of language and deliberation of thought. The memory, it is admitted, is capable of immense cultivation.

Dr. Immanuel Christlieb, of Bonn, has stated that in his own case, while it took him at first four days to commit a sermon to memory, he soon reduced it to two days ; and that now it is only necessary for him to read it over twice, once Saturday night, and once on Sunday morning. He did not state how soon he forgot it !

The testimony also of the late Dr. Thomas Guthrie, who is commonly supposed to have been an extemporaneous speaker, is interesting. Speaking of the manner of preparing for the pulpit he says :

“ Thus the only time left me for preparation for the pulpit, composing my sermons, and so thoroughly committing them that they rose without an effort to my memory (and therefore appeared as if they were born on the spur and stimulus of the moment), was to be found in the morning.”<sup>1</sup>

The example of such a man, and of nearly all the continental preachers of Europe, cannot be entirely disregarded. Have we not possibly erred in America in hold-

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<sup>1</sup> “ Autobiography,” v. i. p. 19.

ing this method in especial disesteem? and may not its confessed disadvantages of confinement, task-work, and want of freedom, entirely vanish in particular cases, and great relief and power be obtained from it when successfully mastered?

Robert Hall, it is well known, mingled the extemporaneous and memoriter methods; and on most occasions made use of his memory for the delivery of the most important and finished parts of his sermon. The following is related of him:

“Once, in a conversation with a few friends who had led him to talk of his preaching, and to answer, among other questions, one respecting the supposed and reported extemporaneous production of the most striking parts of his sermons, in the earlier period of his ministry, he surprised us by saying that most of them, so far from being extemporaneous, had been so deliberately prepared that his words were selected, and the construction and order of the sentences adjusted.”<sup>1</sup>

In this connection it is well to notice what Dr. Samuel Hopkins says of Jonathan Edwards’s preaching.<sup>2</sup>

“He was wont to read so considerable a part of what he delivered, yet he was far from thinking this the best way of preaching in general, and looked upon using his notes so much as he did a deficiency and infirmity; and in the latter part of his life he was inclined to think it would have been better if he had never been accustomed to use his notes at all. It appeared to him that preaching wholly without notes, agreeably to the custom in most Protestant countries, and in what seems evidently to have been the manner of the apostles and primitive preachers of the

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<sup>1</sup> Foster’s “Essay on Robert Hall.”

<sup>2</sup> Works of Edwards, London ed., p. ccxxxi.

gospel, was by far the most natural way, and had the greatest tendency, on the whole, to answer the end of preaching ; and supposed that no one who had talents equal to the work of the ministry was incapable of speaking *memoriter*, if he took suitable pains for this attainment in his youth. He would have the young preacher write all his sermons, or, at least, most of them, out, at large ; and instead of reading them to his hearers, take pains to commit them to memory ; which, though it would require a great deal of labor at first, yet would soon become easier by use, and help him to speak more correctly and freely, and be of great service to him all his days."

Reinhard, before mentioned, early adopted the memoriter style. His reasons for it, strongly urged, may be found in his "Letters on Preaching."

Dr. Hagenbach, in his "Liturgik und Homiletik," recommends the memoriter style first of all, the written next, and the extempore not at all.

Memoriter preaching, sometimes called "reciting," and in Scotland "mandating," a process which it is said may be heard going on with great energy in a Scotch parsonage every Saturday night, was never so much in favor in America as in Europe.

It has certainly, as has been said, some advantages.

(1.) The sermon is first written out and is thus apt to be carefully composed.

Advantages  
of  
memoriter  
preaching.

(2.) It serves to correct the written style, for one readily discovers in delivering the sermon away from the manuscript, whatever is stiff and essayish in it, whatever is not suited to be spoken, whatever cannot be delivered easily and naturally.

(3.) In the delivery, also, if one can conquer the apprehension of breaking down, he has gained accuracy

of language and deliberation of thought, and he can stand erect and look the audience in the face and be free and unconstrained in action. This is an immense gain, and this method, which has heretofore seemed altogether the least fitted for the pulpit, has some serious claims to our regard ; and if it could be united with the extemporaneous method it would seem to be the ideal of preaching. No one at least should say that he cannot adopt this style who has never tried, who has never laid the tax upon his memory.

It is, at all events, a great acquisition to a minister to have his memory stored with passages of Scripture, and even if a preacher adopts a written rather than a memoriter style, he should be so thoroughly familiar with his manuscript that it amounts to a memoriter style.

But this method of preaching has immense disadvantages, which, unless well overcome, make it the least commendable style of all, and one to be avoided.

**Disadvantages of memoriter preaching.**

(1.) The loss of time in committing a sermon to memory. Few men can commit a sermon in less than two days, so as to be perfectly free ; for unless one speaks without a conscious effort at remembering he is of all speakers the most constrained.

(2.) In the monotonous process of the memory the power and animation of the mind must receive a check. It is tying down the memory to a set task, and it becomes doubly a rote-work, first of writing, then of remembering.

(3.) It has the disadvantages of the written method, without securing the advantages of the extemporaneous method. It is the written method, though apparently unwritten ; one is confined, though seemingly free ; he is attempting two processes at once—that of remember-



ing and delivering ; and this real want of freedom will surely make itself manifest, if in no other way, by the abstracted expression of the eyes, gazing at vacancy, by which it will be soon discovered that the preacher is "reading from his memory." There is more honesty and power in openly delivering the sermon from the manuscript ; for the secret being out that one is speaking from memory, the virtue has departed from the discourse.

Then, as to the sermon itself, by repeating it so many times the preacher is apt to get tired of it ; the fire will be taken out of it ; and, after all, it is quite impossible to conceal the idea that it has been written, and thus the air of delivering a thoughtful sermon as if it were composed on the spot will have a shade of insincerity.

But, as I have said, all these objections may vanish in particular cases ; and the example of so many great preachers deserves our earnest consideration.

Let us now proceed to consider the last method of pulpit delivery, for we cannot stop until the ideal of preaching is reached, and the preacher stands forth a free man, the master of all his resources of mind and body, to speak his message directly to the soul, as if it were indeed a "word of life" (and all preaching should be living, or life-creating), just as it is given him to speak, with no painful thought as to the words ; but these are truly "winged words," flying forth as on the breath of the soul.

### 3. Extempore preaching.

It is sometimes imagined that this method is a new thing, a discovery of these latter days, and a great and wonderful reformation of the pulpit.

**Extempore  
preaching.**

If it be a reform of the pulpit (and we hold it to be so)

it will only be travelling back to the earliest times, to the apostolic age, and to the way that nature, the free spirit of man, and the Spirit of God dictate.

Among the classic orators a modified species of improvisation was doubtless in vogue. The practice of writing out the discourse beforehand commenced, it is said, among the Greeks in the time of Pericles, and was in some degree a sign of the decadence of Greek eloquence, though Demosthenes himself, in a former age, was, as has been said, not wholly an extempore speaker.

**The ancient method.**

From the Gorgias of Plato it is easy to deduce the proof that the extemporaneous method was frequently resorted to. Cicero says :

*“ Is orator erit, hoc tam gravi nomine dignus qui quæcumque res inciderit, quæ sit dictione explicanda, prudenter, et composite, et ornate, et memoriter dicat, cum quadam etiam actionis dignitate.”*<sup>1</sup>

This “ memorization ” here spoken of was evidently the recalling of ideas instead of words, and described doubtless, in general terms, the orator’s facility of clothing his remembered ideas in fit language, in fact the power of accurate and forceful extemporization. This, as we have said, was the method of the earliest preachers, and can there be any doubt that it was the apostolic method? Did the apostle Paul need to have his manuscript sermon before him when he stretched forth his hand and said “ Men and brethren ” ?

Dr. Neander, speaking of the first centuries, says :

“ The sermons were sometimes, though rarely, read from notes ; sometimes freely delivered ; and sometimes they were altogether extemporary.”

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<sup>1</sup> “ De Oratore,” I. 15.

This statement of Neander's, that in the early ages sermons were sometimes read, has been controverted, and the evidence against this is pretty strong ; but doubtless there was some preparation in thought and composition ; and in set orations, or occasional sermons, like panegyrics, there was actual writing ; yet, notwithstanding all this, that the earlier patristic preachers were in the common habit of using written notes, there is no proof that we have seen.

A writer in *Blackwood* (February, 1869), generalizing upon this point says : " The ancient mode of preaching was, of course, extempore, with what amount of previous preparation would depend on the powers or habits of the preacher. The sermons of Origen are the first which are recorded as having been taken down by short-hand writers ; and it was probably not until a date comparatively recent that any preacher thought of actually writing out his sermon at any length beforehand, with the view of delivering it from memory, as has been the habit of some of the most successful preachers.

" The practice of reading from a manuscript seems only to have come in after the Reformation, and even then to have been a long time exceptional and unpopular."

It is said that Archbishop Tillotson, after a most conclusive failure, declared he never would attempt extemporaneous speaking again ; and his influence was so great that he has been sometimes called, as was mentioned, the originator of reading written sermons.

It is also related that Dr. South broke down on one occasion at the very opening of an essay at extemporaneous preaching, and with the exclamation, " Lord be merciful to our infirmities," descended rapidly from the pulpit.

Dr. Chalmers might also be mentioned as another in-

stance of failure ; but many instances might be adduced, on the other hand, of preachers who, not succeeding at first, have in the end become powerful off-hand speakers.

Shakespeare says he has seen " great clerks "

" Shiver and look pale ;  
Make periods in the midst of sentences ;  
Throttle their practis'd accents in their fear ;  
And in conclusion doubly have broke off . "

But the preachers who have produced the most impression in ancient and modern times, especially the great revival preachers, have, as a general rule, been extempore speakers ; for this method comes nearest to the true idea of preaching, which is bringing to bear a personal influence upon men, and is a kind of prophesying in which a sanctified personality, cleansed and prepared by the Holy Ghost, becomes the direct medium of divine impartations of truth.

The Holy Spirit more readily speaks through the personality of him who yields himself at the moment, body and soul, to be played upon, filled and voiced, by this higher personality and power of God.

This is the testimony of Dr. Finney, who, whatever his faults may have been, was confessedly a powerful and successful revival preacher. He claimed even a prophetic gift, and, however he may have erred on the side of fanaticism in this, we believe he was a sincere and holy man.

The idea of inspirational rhetoric was, as we have seen, a favorite one of Origen's, and of other great preachers of past ages, who claimed for it a direct and essentially prophetic character. Whether or not this apostolic inspiration be still vouchsafed to the true preacher of



Christ, and how far it may accompany his earnest studies and efforts to interpret the word of God to men, are open questions ; but there can be no question that he who has acquired the ability of speaking freely as God moves him, of uttering the thoughts and emotions that sway his mind with ease and power, is more apt to be God's effective mouthpiece.

Then there is the regeneration of speech. Then speech is electric. It is like lightning from the skies. Then there can be eloquence and something higher—convicting and converting power.

Not that men have not been converted by written sermons, and that great revivals of religion have not been forwarded by written sermons ; but this has been, so to speak, in spite of them, and over them, as a torrent rolls over obstructing obstacles and sweeps all before it.

But extemporaneous preaching, with the uninspired successors of the apostles, rarely can mean unpremeditated preaching, though often, in respect of the immediate preparation of the discourse in hand, it does amount to that.

The great preachers of the Reformation, and since their day such men as Wesley, Robert Hall, Jonathan Edwards, who lived in the sphere of divine contemplations, and whose meat and drink it was to think upon the things of the kingdom of God, were ready to preach at any time, on any occasion, to any length ; for it was but starting a spring whose sources were exhaustless, opening as they do into the infinite thoughts of God.

Calvin in ten years preached four thousand and thirty-four sermons, and John Wesley a far greater proportion than this for fifty years. But it is evident that a great deal has to be done in the case of ordinary men before extemporaneous address is possible.

Coquerel lays down three inexorable pre-requisites of successful extemporaneous preaching.

**Coquerel's requisites of an extemporaneous preacher.** (1.) That the preacher should have an abundant supply of ideas, especially of religious and moral ideas, without which all the advantages of facile delivery amount to nothing; for a lack of ideas leads to the bare repetition of thoughts—to words, words, words.

(2.) There is also needed a rich, intimate, and verbal knowledge of the Scriptures, and especially of the New Testament (we venture to say that a full knowledge of the Old Testament also gives a devotional flavor to the preacher's imagination that hardly anything else can; it smells as of Carmel and Lebanon and the gardens of spices). But a familiarity with, and a facility in repeating, texts, analogues, proofs, allusions, figures, promises, threatenings, proverbs, precepts, reasonings, from the Bible, are of inestimable aid. If the Bible be not a perfectly well-known book to the preacher his improvisations are apt to become mere moral declamations and philosophical platitudes.

(3.) A fluent and idiomatic use of his mother tongue. Otherwise there will be stiffness and mannerism, hiatuses, strained and inverted sentences, confused parentheses, and absolute blunders in the construction of sentences, which will take away one of the great charms and powers of extemporaneous speech—its easy, natural flow. It is not so difficult to commence a sentence, but the difficulty is to end it. Unless with prompt and practised speakers, the decisive word, the key-word of the sentence, which binds it together, is wanting, and the sentence is naught but a jumbled ineffective mass.

We might be allowed to add to these three admirable pre-requisites—

(4.) A disciplined power of thought, that is able to look a subject through to the end.

While extemporization is, in one sense, the easiest, because inspirational, method of speaking, yet in fact it is the most difficult ; it is the ideal, and therefore hardest to reach ; and to extemporize successfully before one has anything to say, and knows how to say it, is not to be thought of. There must be methodized thought before there can be forcible speech.

Thinking, the trained power to think clearly and steadily, keeping the main idea in view as the Olympic racer keeps the goal in sight, this is the golden secret of extemporaneous address. A philosophically trained mind is, intellectually considered, the deepest source of successful extemporization that does not lose itself in a sea of words. Quintilian, in that very striking passage already quoted, says :

*“ Extemporalis oratio nec alio mihi videtur mentis vigore constare.”*

In regard to the actual amount of preparation needed for the act of extemporaneous preaching, McIlvaine, in his able work on elocution (p. 119) re-  
marks : “ The extent or thoroughness of the  
preparation required for extempore speak-  
ing is greater or less, according as the mind  
of the speaker acts with more or less precision and  
rapidity. Too minute preparation resolves extempore  
into memoriter preaching, and instead of relieving  
the mind from the burden of sub-processes, only ex-  
changes one class of them for another. The principle  
which will enable each one to decide this point for him-  
self, turns upon the question how far he can relieve  
himself from the labors of invention and style, without  
loading his memory. As a general rule, however, the

**Amount  
of preparation  
needed.**

speaker, whenever it is possible, ought to prepare beforehand, either mentally or with the aid of the pen, a complete analysis of his discourse, including the distinct statement of the proposition, the arrangement by co-ordination of the general heads, and by subordination of the secondary topics, together with a general statement of the thought contained in each paragraph.

“Such an analysis, which rhetoric teaches us to prepare, may either be carried in the memory without loading it, or it may be committed to paper and referred to when speaking without serious disadvantage. With a fine memory the former method is to be preferred; with a poor memory the latter.”

The process of learning to extemporize will naturally differ with different characters of mind. Some men, we believe most men, will succeed better by writing a great deal. They must use written and memoriter crutches perhaps for a long time until they can fling them away.

This is Zincke's famous method. He says :

“Nor will the practice of extempore speaking deprive a man of the advantage of attaining to that accuracy which is a result of written composition. I am addressing myself to those who

**Zincke's  
method.**

have energy enough to persevere for some years, or for whatever time may be required, in the practice of carefully compiling their sermons during the week, and then preaching them extemporarily on Sunday. The time will come when full notes, containing only the more important parts *in extenso*, will be sufficient, and at last nothing more in most cases be needed than such a sketch as may be written on one side of half a sheet of note paper, the rest of the study being carried on mentally, or without the aid of writing. I suppose that for several years more or less of writing will be necessary, because



that alone will demonstrate to the preacher that he has mastered the subject, and properly arranged his materials, and so will enable his mind to rest on the fact that it has already produced what it now has only to produce in the pulpit.

"And I can imagine persons preferring to the last to write very full abstracts of what they intend to say, and doing this from a religious regard for their work. A sermon, such persons will feel, is too important a work, too much depends upon it, to justify the preacher in leaving anything to the chances of the moment. This must be done to some extent in a debate, and it may be done generally in secular oratory, when the main object is to please; but it is irreverent and unwise to trust in this way to the moment for the matter or arrangement of a sermon. It will, therefore, I think, be better that the preacher, however practised, should never wholly lay aside the pen."<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the wisdom of these counsels of Zincke, we are convinced that some men—perhaps they are exceptions—do better by bold effort, forcing themselves at once to hardy thinking and free expression, and by daring winning. If they stand shivering on the brink in their half-resolve and caution, betokened by their continually keeping up the writing process, they will never plunge in and succeed as swimmers. These bolder men, if they succeed, will make the best extempore preachers, because they trust themselves and lay their power of speaking in *thinking*, in the energy of the mind rather than in rhetoric or the outward expression. But all would agree, who know anything about the subject, or have any personal experience in regard to it, that there

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<sup>1</sup> "The Duty and Discipline of Extemporary Preaching," p. 33.

must be a severe preparation, that there must be intensely hard study, planning, even composition of the discourse—it may be wholly mental—before coming up to the act of speaking.

Thought and method, like a strong engine and snow-plough, should clear the track for the train to go smoothly and swiftly over.

Dr. Richard S. Storrs, in his lectures on this subject, gives essentially the same advice. He says :

“ It is indispensable, therefore, that the  
 Storrs  
 on extempore  
 preaching.      main plan of the sermon be from the start  
 so plainly in view that it comes up of itself,  
 as it is needed, and does not require  
 to be pulled into sight at any effort. To this end,  
 it must be simple, obvious, natural, so that it fixes  
 itself in the mind ; it must be clearly articulated in  
 its parts. If possible, let it be so arranged that one  
 point naturally leads to another, and, when the treat-  
 ment of it is finished leaves you in front of that which  
 comes next. Then take up that and treat it in its order,  
 until through that treatment you reach the third, and find  
 it inevitable to proceed to consider that. By such a pro-  
 gressive arrangement of thought you are yourself carried  
 forward ; your faculties have continual liberty ; you are  
 not forced to pause in the work of addressing yourself  
 directly to the people. There must be connection as  
 well as succession, in the thoughts which one would ex-  
 press without notes ; and the more fully and deeply the  
 plan of the discourse is imbedded in the mind, and made  
 self-suggestive, the more elastic and buoyant is the tread  
 of the mind in all the discussion. If needful to this re-  
 sult, I would write the plan of the sermon over twenty  
 times before preaching it ; not copying, merely, from  
 one piece of paper upon another, but writing it out, care-

fully and fully each time independently, till I perfectly knew it ; till it was fixed absolutely in the mind."''<sup>1</sup>

The late Rev. Henry Ware, of Cambridge, Mass, author of a most valuable essay upon Extemporaneous Preaching, though a peculiarly retiring and modest man, was really the pioneer of this great reformation in pulpit delivery in this country, which reform has been so exceedingly slow in its progress that it seems even now to halt as if uncertain of future success.

Henry Ware  
on extempore  
preaching.

In the biography of Mr. Ware the difficulties he encountered in taking this bold step are graphically told. He was not naturally fluent and was constitutionally diffident. His first attempts were in his weekly prayer-meetings, and perhaps but one to six or seven of his sermons followed this method ; and he put so much labor into these efforts that his regular extempore sermons gained for him very little time or study. But when his eyesight became impaired he realized the benefit of this method, and his extempore speaking was distinguished for its simplicity, gravity, and impressiveness. He says in a letter to his brother :

" Don't give up the ship for one unfortunate fire. Why, I have suffered more than Indian torture fifty times ; but then I had Indian perseverance, and it is only by not flinching that we can gain the end at last. You must expect, as a matter of course, sometimes to do ill. The state of the mind, of the health, of the digestive organs, all these unaccountably affect the intellectual powers. And then, sometimes, you will make too much preparation, that is, trying to arrange the words ; and sometimes make too little, that is by arranging no

<sup>1</sup> " Conditions of Success in Preaching without Notes," p. 109.

thoughts; and in either case you will flounder. But after beginning it were wicked to be disheartened."

But before we proceed further in a more practical direction let us ask, What is extemporaneous preaching?

Extempore preaching, according to Coquerel's definition, has been described to be that "in which the speaker knows what he has to say, but does not know how he is to say it."

(" *La véritable improvisation consiste en deux traits inséparables : l'orateur sait ce qu'il va dire et ne sait pas comment il le dira.*")

Its chief force and inspiration are in the thought, the idea, the substance of the matter, not in the words. It is in fact trusting to the moment of speaking for the form of words in which the thought is expressed. That is all, though that is a great thing.

Extempore preaching, as has been said, is not improvident or unpremeditated preaching. If extempore preaching be made to refer to unpremeditated thought as well as language, we would have none of it.

Thus purely extemporaneous speaking is almost out of the question except as regards brief expressions of opinion and feeling which occur spontaneously in the excitation of the mind upon a particular theme, and do sometimes in a written as well as an extemporaneous discourse.

Schleiermacher, although he preached extemporaneously, gave this counsel (and these words have been already quoted) to preachers: "Before going into the pulpit, the sermon as a whole, that is, the separate thoughts in their relation to all the members, and to the whole, should be clearly in the mind."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hagenbach's "Homiletics," p. 137.



The argument sometimes used for not making a faithful preparation for preaching, that God will now, as in apostolic times, put into the mouth of preachers the words they shall utter, borders, at least, upon presumption, and may lead to fanaticism. It is also a false view of Scripture, and is sometimes made an excuse for indolence and hypocrisy.

There *is* an inspiration which at favored moments comes upon true preachers, in which they do become the mouthpieces of God's Spirit ; but this is a different thing from the venturesome assumption that God will inspire one at the moment of utterance with just what he should say.

Bautain's definition of extempore speaking is this : " Extemporization consists in speaking on the first impulse ; that is to say, without preliminary arrangement of phrases. It is the instantaneous manifestation, the expression, of an actual thought, or the sudden explosion of a feeling or mental movement. It is very evident that extemporization can act only on the form of words." Bautain's  
definition.

Now let us set forth briefly, in encouragement of this method, rightly understood, a few of the advantages belonging to this mode of pulpit delivery, some of which, it is true, are obvious and familiar, though for that reason none the less important.

(1.) It stimulates the preacher. It wakes him up. It makes him a quick thinker. It makes him master of his mental powers. It goads him by the presence and sympathy of an expectant audience. It often originates entirely new thoughts, of living power, that could not have come into the mind in the calm silence of the study Advantages of  
extemporaneous  
speaking.

<sup>1</sup> " Art of Extemporaneous Speaking," p. 3.

We quote here a few words from a letter of Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., whose little work on "Extemporaneous Preaching" has been commended. He was meditating the change in his own method of preaching, and writes to his father concerning a distinguished English preacher named Spencer. He says :

" Much, too, of his animation and effect must be attributed to his extempore speaking, which gives a liveliness, an energy, and a glow to eloquence that is not otherwise attained. I have already begun to consider seriously whether I shall not attempt learning the art. I do not mean for constant practice ; but some subjects may be better treated by extemporaneous discourse than by written, and much of the illustration and exhortation of every sermon might be left for the management of the moment. It is unquestionable there is a life, a soul, as it were, transfused into unpremeditated expressions, which appeals with far greater force to the sympathy of hearers than anything which can be written. There is a *je ne sais quoi* in the countenance, the tone of the voice, the gesture, which goes directly to the heart, and which you in vain try to give to a written production.

" Animated declamation, even if it be rather flat sense, will be more effectual than the most elaborate composition read in the usual way.

" Dugald Stewart, in his ' Essays,' intimates, you may remember, that the art may be acquired by any one ; and, if I could obtain it, what a saving of time there would be." <sup>1</sup>

(2.) It breaks up a stiff, artificial style.

Gossner, quoted by Hagenbach, said : " He who is a true preacher is not obliged first to meditate and conceive

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<sup>1</sup> " Life of Henry Ware Jr.," by his brother, John Ware, M.D., p. 72.

at a writing-desk what he has to say, but with trustful courage to mount the pulpit and speak, even as, on the day of Pentecost, fiery tongues, not writing pens, fell from heaven on the apostles." In extempore speaking, the preacher learns to go at once to the heart of things, and to express himself in a direct manner. He thus acquires a manly straightforwardness. The elaborate beauties and fastidious elegances of a highly rhetorical style are inconsistent with extempore speaking. Extempore speaking tends also to the concrete rather than the abstract; to vivid manifestation and illustration of thought, rather than technical reasoning. It is less philosophical, but has more of flesh and blood in it; it makes the hearer thrill with something that is taken from the hour in which he lives, the thought his heart is busy with, and the work his hands are glowing with.

(3.) It is adapted to produce immediate effect. It enables the speaker thus to feel the pulse of an audience, to meet its exact wants, and to judge of its state by those fine and delicate signs which a skillful extemporaneous preacher learns to detect. It gives the impression that one is really talking to the audience before him, and to no other. Hence extemporaneous preaching is peculiarly adapted to times of revival; and it is a strong argument in its favor, that it does unconsciously take the place of other methods in times of real urgency.

(4.) It has more of outward and inward freedom.

It enables one to stand erect and look the audience in the face. The hearer naturally seeks the eye of the speaker, but if that is upon his notes, and there is no response, a dulling, deadening effect is produced. The eye has wonderful influence; and the extempore method gives play to the eye, the arm, the finger, the whole body, and also to the subtler motions of the soul; so that

the whole man becomes an instrument for God's Spirit to speak through.

Thus extemporaneous preaching is really the most philosophical method, and comes nearest to the ideal of preaching, which is the bringing to bear a personal influence upon hearers.

Perhaps the highest conceivable efficiency of the orator and of the preacher has been brought out in extemporaneous speech. Though every speaker is not capable of eloquence, every true preacher has probably done *his* best at a moment when he was free, when the pressure was on him, when he must speak or die, and when to his own apprehension, it may be, he was making the most entire and conclusive failure. But the people at once see the difference between what is free and what is artificial—between sincerity and false confidence. Once let it be understood that the strait-jacket has been thrown off, that the soul acts unrestrainedly, and the congregation feels it and rejoices in it.

In this method, the preacher is able to use whatever thought occurs to him at the moment. He is not prevented by fears that it will spoil the unity of his sermon. Locke says, "Thoughts are best which drop into the mind." With all previous preparation, room, nevertheless, should be left in extemporaneous speaking for purely *new* thoughts—thoughts which literally occur at the moment. Sometimes one may change the whole current of his discourse, and dwell upon a thought as the main thought, which he intended to make only a side thought, or, perhaps, not to introduce at all; and this is the ideal of extemporaneous preaching: not often reached, it is true, but sometimes reached when the speaker is inspired with perfect freedom of utterance.

Then too, oftentimes, in speaking new exigencies arise,



sudden needs present themselves, individual cases suggested by the countenances before him come up to the preacher, that he should be able to meet at the moment, and if he is not hampered with a written discourse, he is better able to do this. The people feel that he is preaching to *them*, not to an imaginary audience, or as one who is beating the air.

(5.) It enables one to use a more conversational and sympathetic style, both of thought and delivery.

This, perhaps, is the greatest advantage of the extemporaneous method, that it serves to abolish a strained style, which supposes certain circumstances, and certain characters, and certain antagonisms, and certain wants that do not exist in an audience—in which style one may write, but cannot talk—and tends to make preaching more like ordinary conversation, without at the same time losing its dignity.

“ Human nature runs to extremes. Some ministers offend our taste and shock our sensibilities in a mistaken effort to be all things to all men. A reverent remembrance of the Master whom they serve, should save them from real or affected coarseness, levity, egotism, and effrontery. A minister may stoop too low as well as stand too high above the people. The old high pulpits are taken away, and the low reading-desks are put in their places, and that is well. But if the preacher does not stand high enough for the people to look up a little, and for him to have a clear, broad outlook at them, both they and he lose something.

“ It is true that ministers may aim too high, and all their sermons go over the heads of the people ; but there is one type of sermonizing current to-day that aims too low. In breaking away from the old professional formalities and pulpit conventionalities, and cultivating a natural,

direct talking to the people, something of the real dignity and nobility of religious truth is sacrificed. A preacher should be sure to hit his hearers. The truth should go straight from his heart into theirs. He should study and practice all methods of attack, that there be no armor proof against his weapons. But this can be done by lifting them up to his level, as well as by stooping down to theirs. A skillful general decoys the enemy from their low retreats that he may meet them on good vantage ground. Truth need not borrow the livery of any strange master ; it need not clothe itself in garments that have been dragged in the mire. Its own robes will fit any form of humanity. The best a man has in him, used in the best way, is never too good for God's work, though his particular part of that work may seem humble and insignificant.

“ Then let God's ambassadors meet men through the best there is in them. Let the minister make men feel that he too is a man with comprehension and sympathy for whatever enters into humanity, but let him choose wisely and purely his points of contact, never forgetting that he is preaching God's truth.”

Let a man *talk* to his audience, and if he do it sensibly and earnestly, with sufficient care not to be low in language, every one will listen ; just as everybody will listen to any one who converses well. The moment a preacher ceases declaiming, and begins talking, every one wakes up. That is the power of many of our greatest living orators, both clerical and secular. These men do not talk spasmodic nonsense, but their “ forte ” lies in uttering fresh and substantial thought in the natural language of ordinary and earnest conversation among men ; they talk to an audience as one clever man talks to another ; they gradually bring an audience into their own way of think-

ing by thus stooping to conquer. This style, when kept free from familiarity or lowness, is the perfection of close, affectionate, reasonable, interesting, and effective preaching.

We remember an extemporaneous sermon preached by the French Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec. His discourse was, for the most part, in its substance and doctrine, sheer Mariolatry ; yet the immense assembly hung entranced on his words, as he stood, simply erect, without gesture, his hands laid passively on the cushion before him, while he talked in a natural tone, in plain but beautifully-flowing periods, and without hesitation.

It was like listening to a strain of pleasing music, with nothing highly wrought, but bearing the minds of the hearers steadily upon its even, calm, and rapid flow. It was not eloquence, but it was nevertheless potent to hold a great multitude in wrapt attention, and by its simple charm of natural, unaffected, fluent speech, to command and sway men's minds.

If, therefore, extemporaneous speaking of the true kind has in it more of nature, more of animation, more of living appeal to the heart and eye, voice and gesture, than any other method ; if it tends to put preachers *en rapport* with their congregations, we would say, Let every preacher who can do so begin at once to practise it, even if it cost him a complete revolution of his mental habits. Better live in a cave six months until he has become master of his own faculties of mind and body, than to be a dead preacher, who cannot, with all his writing, reasoning, and preaching, reach an audience or a soul.

Practical  
hints for ex-  
temporaneous  
preaching.

Let us now give a few practical hints for extemporaneous speaking, at the risk again of some repetition.

(a.) Train yourself to think without writing. This power of mental abstraction, or what Dr. Brown calls "the imperial presence of mind," is the source of extempore speaking, which has its spring in the thinking faculty. Mental discipline tells on the power of extemporaneous speech. One should have some logical and theological training before he can speak clearly on divine themes; for "that which is well conceived is clearly enunciated," says Bautain. The real ability for extemporaneous speaking comes from having clear ideas, not merely from having the faculty of language. It comes from thinking. Its rationale is vigor of mind disciplined by culture. As we have said, it did not probably require much preparation for Luther, nor, in more modern times, Robert Hall and John Wesley, to preach on any subject connected with divine truth; and so it may be with any man who is a working and growing theologian, and who has cultivated a homiletical habit of mind. Such a man's actual preparation for speaking may be brief. But one, unless he have extraordinary talent for this method of speaking, when beginning to preach extemporaneously, should make careful and particular preparation for it.

(b.) Think through the subject beforehand.

Everything in extemporaneous speaking depends on a complete mastery of the subject. The great difficulty with extemporaneous preaching is that it may run into something superficial. Here is its danger; so long as that is avoided it is safe. If one does not give as much study to this method of preaching as to any other, or even more, he will not succeed in it. The foundations of the sermon should be laid firm and deep. There should be no indefiniteness or obscureness here. Never trust to the inspiration of the moment for the solid parts of the discourse, the main ideas, the arguments, the proofs, the



conclusions. These should be thoroughly settled. See the whole discourse clear through to the end like sunlight on a road.

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that extempore preaching will succeed without such previous study ; here is the mistake that has lain at the root of failure. Bautain makes a great deal of what he calls the " main idea ;" there must be this *main idea* in every living discourse, and this should be firmly fixed in the speaker's mind. However he may be moved by passionate thoughts, however freely he may speak, whatever digressions he may make, whatever new thoughts or illustrations come into his mind, let him not lose sight of the end he has in view, and this will remain master of his mind, of his subject, and of his hearers. This will even form its own plan, and every detail will group itself naturally about this principal idea. This sustains all, and must never for a moment be lost sight of. " Nothing," says Bautain, " is so fatal to extemporization as this wretched facility of the mind for losing itself in details, and neglecting the main point." One should also avoid the common error, in extemporaneous speaking, of talking a great deal about unessentials ; of introducing long and stereotyped phrases of parliamentary or argumentative persiflage as to what he intends to prove or say.

(c.) Prepare beforehand, either mentally or on paper, the actual wording of your main proposition and the principal divisions, and perhaps of some of the most important passages.

The actual composition of the discourse, to use this word in its largest sense, should indeed be complete in all its parts, before it is preached. It is the height of foolish audacity for one to go into the pulpit with no definite preparation of the sermon, with a text unstudied,

with no clear plan, with confused ideas, and with a few hurried notes, perhaps, trusting to the moment to clear up difficulties and make all plain and forcible. The price of good extemporaneous preaching is good preparation. It may be recommended, indeed, to some beginners to combine the two methods of the written and extemporaneous sermon ; *i.e.*, to write a good portion of the sermon—the body of the sermon—and trust the rest to the utterance of the moment. The illustrations, for example, may be given extemporaneously, and will gain decidedly in freedom, vividness, and life. But perhaps it is best at first to write out the sermon altogether, and then if you choose destroy it. That will have aroused and clarified the mind ; the subject will have become a familiar road for the mind to travel ; by and by one can diminish or give up altogether the written preparation. The German preachers pursue this method of previously writing their sermons, and then preaching them without the manuscript. The Welsh do it also, and they are remarkable preachers. This, we have seen, is F. B. Zincke's famous method of making an extempore preacher.

Into the pulpit itself, Dr. J. W. Alexander advises, "carry not a scrap of paper. But if a little schedule would give more confidence at first, take it." We should say, quite decidedly, take into the pulpit a written sermon, or nothing.

One can learn to swim only in the water. Bautain is strongly opposed to making use of any notes in extemporaneous speaking ; he does not even think that the advice of Cicero should be regarded. Dr. McIlvaine says : "Use no notes." Confidence in speaking comes from trust in one's own mental resources. We are well convinced that when one has acquired a tolerable ease in expressing himself, that to have clear thoughts is of more

importance than anything else ; and if one have the whole sermon orderly arranged from beginning to end, leaving no gap, something more than a mere skeleton, a well-knit continuous frame-work, if he have the ideas thus well arranged and woven together, the words will take care of themselves.

But many have not this power of ready expression, and it is necessary for such to make some written preparation, or, at all events, some mental composition of the more important portions of the discourse. The old motto applies to it, "rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." It ought to be the best kind of preaching, because its principle is thought, not words.

(*d.*) Cultivate the faculty of expression. We have already spoken of this.

"For you must not," says Bautain, "grope for your words while speaking, under the penalty of braying like a donkey, which is the death of a discourse."

Not only the power of thinking, but the power of uttering, is to be cultivated ; and to have this power—never to be at a loss for the fit word—this itself is a noble accomplishment. The faculty of expression is a part of clerical education that has been too much neglected. Pitt used to translate aloud, in a running method, from foreign languages, being critical in the choice of his words ; Cicero's method was to read an author, and then repeat the author's thoughts in his own words. The principle of association is a great law of facile expression ; for one may accustom himself to remember what he has to say even by a word in each proposition or division—by some word naturally suggested from the text itself ; but it is better to remember by the association of ideas than of words. This clue, or thread of ideas, the extemporaneous speaker should never lose or he is lost. The

text itself, faithfully kept in mind, and frequently recurred to, is the best and most natural clue. There is, perhaps no better way of cultivating the power of expression, than by cultivating the habit of conversing with facility, accuracy, and correctness. Let no one allow himself to converse loosely, vaguely, or incoherently—avoiding both undue precision and undue laxness. Yet there is a certain mere facility of expression, or fluency, which may become a dangerous gift to a speaker. It serves him in the place of thought, and it will be soon discovered to his injury. It also tends to destroy his power, by giving him an appearance of arrogance, or a dictatorial manner. More of humility, and hesitancy of speech, is sometimes effective in a young speaker. What have been called “fluent, complacent, mechanical utterances” are not enough for the pulpit.

(e.) Make a beginning at once. Stand not shivering on the brink. Eloquent speaking is gained by always working and striving for the power of free and forceful utterance, and by giving one’s whole attention to it—by coming up to it again and again, even if one fails at first. It is doing it, and not preparing to do it. Robert Hall, at an earlier day, as well as some distinguished extemporaneous preachers of the present day, made, it is said, miserable failures at first in attempting extemporaneous addresses.

(f.) Do not choose too easy or familiar subjects. This is a common error. The mind should be interested in the development of some new and specific truth, in which it may be thoroughly roused and tasked.

Yet once more before leaving this subject would we emphasize the truth that in order to become a good extemporaneous speaker one must put *more* study and labor into an extemporaneous discourse, than he would into a



written one. When men are willing to do this then they may talk about extemporaneous speaking. The failure arises in making this method an excuse for not studying, in making it too easy, in not making sufficient preparation. Better far the written sermon than the incoherent off-hand address, without good work in it.

(*g.*) Look beyond and above the opinion of men upon your preaching.

To speak extemporaneously one must have courage, faith, enthusiasm.

Let one think more of his duty than of his reputation. If one has this spirit, he will not be disheartened at a blunder, nor even if he now and then breaks down. A little incorrectness of language, or halting hesitation, in extempore speaking, is of small importance, and will not be censured by the audience so much as the speaker imagines—especially if they see he is in earnest. A modern writer well says of a young speaker, “Sometimes a momentary pause—a hesitation to collect the thought and utter the right word—is a becoming act of deference to an intelligent audience.” One who has “a mission to teach” is apt to forget that “reserve is an element of strength.” It is better not to be always finished and polished. A rough, ragged, imperfectly expressed remark, boldly thrown out and left, is sometimes more suggestive to the hearer’s mind than the most elaborate paragraph. One should not go back to improve a sentence in extemporaneous speaking. Let him press on boldly to the end, no matter how he comes out.

But as the undue fear of man vanishes, so much of the imaginary difficulty of extempore speaking vanishes. If a great part of extemporaneous speaking consists in preserving one’s presence of mind, what will better enable one to do this than to look beyond man to God?

(h.) Cultivate oratorical delivery. Here elocution is of great importance. The written sermon depends much for its interest upon its carefully condensed thought ; but the extempore speaker must have everything in himself : he must have the charms of good delivery, the trained voice, the natural gesture, and the dignified and expressive attitude. He needs all the helps that can be given by the eye, the hand, the “eloquence of the body ;” for it is with him good delivery or nothing. He should acquire a clear, distinct articulation, rising and falling naturally with the thought ; varied and yet even ; neat and yet capable of feeling, and of vehement, rending force ; and, above all, free from tones of earthly passion, and breathing pure, holy, spiritual emotions.

There is a great tendency in extemporaneous speaking to run into a hurried method of delivery. The speaker should retain his calmness. He should take a respiration of the right length to speak the whole sentence with ease and effect. He should not get into a run, so to speak, and hurry his throat beyond its powers.

Cicero says : “ *Longissima est complexio verborum, quae volvi uno spiritu potest.* ” “ The longest phrase is that which one is able to pronounce with one act of respiration.”

It is a great thing to keep cool, to preserve a mastery of all one’s resources. Therefore it is better to speak slowly at first, and be careful to frame every sentence carefully and grammatically, and to finish it neatly in all its parts. By and by, as the mind gets roused and active, it can frame sentences more rapidly, without conscious effort. The preacher may be his own master of delivery and elocution-teacher. It is thought, chiefly, that does this. It is said that Macready studied the play of “Hamlet” seven years before he felt himself equal to act it. Every sentence, every syllable, had received thought,

so that he was able to bring out its full meaning in delivery, to give it its effective emphasis, to be the vehicle of the spirit's winged words.

We conclude this special topic of the classification of sermons according to their delivery, and indeed the whole theme of Homiletics proper, with three practical suggestions, as summing up the results that we have been able to arrive at on this important subject of the method of preaching.

1. Let the preacher who earnestly desires to be effective in the pulpit, but to whom has been denied the extemporaneous gift, make a brave attempt to secure and combine the advantages of the Final suggestions. three methods that have been mentioned, since, as has been seen, there is good in them all. Let him write out his sermon carefully and fully. Let him commit it to memory, or, at least, make himself perfectly familiar with it; and then let him preach it as a free discourse, without a scrap of writing before him, and without great care to adhere strictly to the preconceived or precomposed language. This, if we mistake not, is essentially the method of the Rev. Dr. John Hall, the eminent Presbyterian minister of New York.

If one will only take the pains, the unwearied pains, to follow out this plan, or something like it, he can secure the benefits of the written method with its thoughtful composition and precision of style; of the memoriter method with its ease and sense of confidence which it brings; and of the extemporaneous method with its freshness, naturalness, *vivida vis animi*, and freedom of attitude and spirit. This is doing in the way of preparation all that one, humanly speaking, can do. It is the employment of all his powers, the very utmost of his effort and care.

2. Let one who is learning to preach and who finds himself tempted to facile methods of preparation, for a time at least, and it may be, to the end of his life, mingle the two styles, viz., that of preaching from written notes and that of preaching extemporaneously. Let him speak half of the day in one and the other half in the other method. This is strongly recommended by the Rev. Dr. Shedd.<sup>1</sup>

In this way the valuable exercise of the pen will not be lost. The clear arrangement, the accuracy of style, the literary and artistic elaboration in the shading of thought, and the elegant finish and brevity which the constant use of the pen is fitted to secure, will be maintained, while at the same time the extemporaneous method will be restrained from its extreme and loose tendencies, and will gain also real strength. This is the method which, we sincerely believe, most preachers could, with the best success, follow.

3. Let him who is strong enough, and has the apostolic faith (for preaching is faith) dare to make use of a more excellent way. We speak especially to young preachers. The all-absorbing desire to save men's souls, the working, and thinking, and living for that purpose, being taken for granted, let the young preacher cut loose entirely from the trammels of writing. Let him dwell in communion with the Spirit of truth. Let him train himself and trust to hardy thinking. Let him forget himself. Let him purify himself to become the true exponent of God, not aiming to be eloquent, but to speak only what God gives him to speak, what is simple, what is the exact fact, what is the real verity respecting God, nature, the soul, the law of God, Christ and his cross, repentance, faith, the

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<sup>1</sup> "Homiletics and Pastoral Theology," p. 242.



experience of the heart, its real trial, anguish, doubt, sin, fear, hope, joy, love ; in a word, living truth, and the plain, earnest thought and feeling which correlate this truth, and which the Holy Ghost teaches, and thus by despising eloquence, by not meaning to be eloquent, to be eloquent. Let him rise above the fear of man and yield himself boldly and wholly into the hands of God to guide, to teach, to inspire, to use. Let him abjure the slavery of the writing-desk, though not the severe labor of study, and, having given all his powers to the interpretation of the word, and having his mind filled with the truth and his heart with the love of his flock, let the preacher stand up in his simple manhood on a level with those he addresses, and speak like a prophet, like a messenger of the love of God in Jesus Christ to men.

Should this become the method of preaching for the next hundred years of our American Christianity, as it was of the apostles and earliest preachers of the faith, then will a great light spring up, and it will be recorded in this New World what was written aforetime in old Judæa : " So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> " We soon learn to speak what we love ; the heart supplies us much better than the memory, and has also a language which the memory does not know. A holy pastor, moved by God, and by regard for the salvation of souls which are confided to him, finds, in the liveliness of his zeal, and the fulness of his heart, expressions having the impress of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and of light, a thousand times more powerful to move, to reclaim sinners, than all those which are furnished by labor and the vain artifice of human eloquence. The talent of an orator is not what is required ; it is the talent of a father ; and what other talent does a father need in speaking to his children but affection for them, and a desire for their welfare." Massillon : " Dix-Septieme Discours Synodal."

## PART SECOND.

### RHETORIC APPLIED TO PREACHING.

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#### FIRST DIVISION.

##### GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF RHETORIC.

###### SEC. 22. *Definition of Rhetoric.*

Rhetoric was formerly an absorbing study in schools of learning when they were more truly theological schools than they are at present, and in ancient times it comprised the full half of education ; and since knowledge of rhetoric implies an acquaintance with logic, metaphysics, and the science of language, Milton assigned to it the last, and, as it were, crowning place in a system of education ; but we are now specially to discuss some of the uses of rhetoric as applied to preaching—its advantages in enabling the preacher to master and methodize truth, so as to present it with the most power to the minds of men, that they may more readily grasp it, and that it may, by God's blessing, produce immediate and lasting results.

As it is needful, for this purpose, that the preacher should make use of his natural powers ; as he must call into exercise his reason and persuasive faculties ; as he

must avail himself of the laws of mental science and the capacities of human speech, just as he does in conveying any natural truth to the mind—it thus becomes essential for him to understand those universal principles of persuasion, and those laws of thoughtful discourse, which form in themselves an important subject of inquiry, and mark a definite science.

The word “rhetoric” is derived from *ῥήτωρ*, a speaker, or orator (from stem *ῥε*, to speak, seen in the fut. *ἐρῶ*, I will speak). This primary meaning of the word should not be lost sight of in considering the true scope and functions of the art of rhetoric; for it shows that the term was originally exclusively applied to the art of public speaking, or to a spoken discourse.

**Derivation  
of the word.**

Before endeavoring particularly to define what true rhetoric is, let us notice some of the leading ideas which have prevailed concerning it.

(1.) Ancient ideas of rhetoric. These are represented principally by Aristotle and Plato. Aristotle confined rhetoric almost entirely to the art of public speaking. In accordance with the genius of the free Greek state, where every citizen was an independent thinking and governing power, and the state was chiefly composed of the voting citizens who resided in the city, and could thus be reached and swayed by the public orator, the popular deliberative assembly, in which the civil leader or counsellor could come directly in contact with the popular mind, was the great field for the practice of the rhetorical art. This art formed one of the chief means of obtaining mastery over men—of the science of politics. It therefore became associated with the arts, managements, and sophistries of political leaders, and

**Ancient ideas  
of rhetoric.  
Aristotle.**

began to be looked upon with suspicion, as meaning something in itself artful, or artificial.

Aristotle, although he gave rhetoric a place in ethical science, and discusses under this term the nature of the moral sensibilities and passions, still, in the main, he regarded it in the light of purely instrumental art; he looked upon it as a means of mastery; as a means to an end. If he regarded virtue and truth as true rhetorical forces, yet he considered them as secondary or incidental elements in the dynamics of rhetoric. Rhetoric, with him, was the art of proving. It was nearly identical with logic, or reasoning. Whatever would enable one to carry his point, to gain the victory, came under the faculty of "*Ῥητορικὴ*." The end of rhetoric, with Aristotle, was persuasion. He called it "a faculty of considering all the possible means of persuasion on every subject."<sup>1</sup> It was thus, in his idea, a kind of offshoot of dialectics and politics. It was the wrestling of mind with mind; the skillful and strenuous assault upon minds, with every means of argument and persuasion to subdue them. It was the art of making men believe as we would wish them to believe, and do as we would wish them to do. Every one might come, good or bad, and gather weapons from this art, and make himself a powerful man to carry his ends with the people. Aristotle's view thus gave the turn to the ancient idea of rhetoric, and it came to be looked upon as a species of dialectic skill that might be taught and acquired, by which the public mind could be influenced, and ambitious ends attained. By the dexterous use of words, plausible arguments, striking terms of speech, and tricks of delivery, the orator could lead the people at will. Aristotle argues, as has been said, that

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's "*Rhetoric*," B. i. c. ii. s. i.



truth itself has an inherent rhetorical power, and he has much to say upon the ethical aspects of the art ; but, if we mistake not, the view which has been given was, in the main, Aristotle's conception of rhetoric ; and, doubtless, in the technical sense of the term, he was correct—that rhetoric is the art of persuasion by public discourse. Grote says that Aristotle preferred philosophy to rhetoric, and therefore he has made his “*Organon*” on the logical far more thorough than on the rhetorical side. In fact, the “*Organon*” itself is the collection of Aristotle's logical writings. He also failed in the sensibility which distinguishes an æsthetic from a logical science ; and he therefore treated style as a merely subordinate department of dialectics, instead of being a science by itself.<sup>1</sup> His own style was good as far as it went, and he was greatly opposed to the ambitious and empty style of Isocrates ; but he did not appreciate the very highest qualities of style. His faults were those of elliptical brevity and obscurity. But he is chiefly anxious to lay down the principles of impugning and defending theses. Rhetoric, he thought, had chiefly to do with words and discourse, not with thoughts, facts, and things. It was the power and accomplishment of discourse. It does not deal with universal or scientific facts, but with opinions, accredited opinions, and its great aim is to persuade an audience into a favorable opinion. It does not go deeper than opinion, and does not concern itself with principles, or with establishing by induction such principles as may serve as the basis of proof. Rhetoric was, with Aristotle, an ingenious setting forth of the general opinions current among orators and public men. He prescribes the dialectic exercise to speakers, familiarity with popular

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<sup>1</sup> Grote, Aristotle, v. i. p. 385.

views, and power of talking to and comprehending the people—such as now we should almost call the art of the demagogue, or popular tribune. He does not require the rhetor to prove but only to persuade. Notwithstanding all this, Aristotle had a more thoroughly scientific view of rhetoric than Plato, though morally not so noble.

Plato also thought that rhetoric belonged to the province of opinion ; but he would address men with argu-

ments drawn from common sense and right  
**Plato.** rather than from scientific dialectics. Plato

in heart was opposed to the strictly scientific method of Aristotle, but he adds much that is noble to the science. Morally speaking, he held higher views than Aristotle, and came very near to the best modern conceptions of rhetoric. Under the name and sanction of Socrates, in various treatises, above all in the “Gorgias,” Plato attacks the mere art or artifice of rhetoric, showing the unphilosophical and unprincipled character of the sophistic idea of rhetoric, as a mere art to win by ; that if it were solely the application of means to an end, that end might be the basest imaginable, and the art of rhetoric might thus be wholly the art of deceiving and corrupting. This kind of rhetoric, founded on empirical rules, aiming at immediate success, and exalting the seeming over the true—Plato pronounced worthless. He proves, also, that it is no true art ; that it is but a kind of skill or knack, like the boxer’s art. After refuting this low idea of rhetoric, he gives his own conception of the orator ; the true orator is shown to be the man who, though he strives for mastery (and Plato, in so many words, calls eloquence “the art of ruling the minds of men”), yet the true orator is he who does not strive alone, or mainly, for mastery, but who aims to build up truth and justice in the state, and to exalt himself by just means, and for the good

of the people, and who, even if unsuccessful in carrying his point or in obtaining rule, is, nevertheless, declared to be the true orator.

Cicero held the views of Aristotle, from whom he draws his own. He speaks of his own art with the enthusiasm and zeal of an orator, rather than with the conscientiousness of a philosopher.<sup>1</sup> He is

Cicero.

even more intense than Aristotle in the idea of the purely instrumental character of rhetoric, and he applies oratory chiefly to the business of civil polity, and to the acquiring of mastery in that. He exults in it as an art of fence, or as a strong weapon not possessed by every one, and which is to be skillfully wielded for the purpose of self-defence, power, and conquest; he says, "What is so useful as at all times to bear about those weapons by which you can defend yourself, challenge the infamous, and, being wounded, revenge?"<sup>2</sup> Cicero was naturally cold in his disposition, and inclined to ornament for its own sake; and, though often affirming it, he nevertheless, in spirit, differed from the high Platonic or Socratic view, which made so much of the *moral* idea in rhetoric; and he conceded almost everything to outward grace, ornament, and attraction. "There may be many good speakers," he said, "but he alone is eloquent who can in a more admirable and noble manner amplify and adorn whatever subjects he chooses, and who embraces in thought and memory all the principles of everything relating to oratory."<sup>3</sup>

Quintilian's idea of the art of oratory was nearly the same as that held by Cicero, although he maintained, with much more emphasis than

Quintilian.

<sup>1</sup> "De Oratore," B. ii. c. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, B. i. c. viii.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, B. i. c. xxi.

that the orator must be a good man.<sup>1</sup> His practical idea of rhetoric, however, was, that it is a means to an end, and that the end often justifies the means ; and his brief definition of oratory is, “ the science of speaking well ;” affirming the great object and the ultimate end of oratory to be, “ to speak well.”

(2.) Modern ideas of rhetoric. In considering these, we should not forget that ages have passed away, bringing great changes of manners and thought with them ; that the enlargement of the means of popular address, and of the diffusion of ideas, chiefly through the press, has widened the field of rhetoric ; and that the whole moral revolution which Christianity has wrought in the intellectual and social world has tended to elevate the conception of the rhetorical art. As one of the forces of the world, Christianity has claimed rhetoric, and permeated it with something of its own spirit, so that there is felt and acknowledged to be such a thing as Christian eloquence.

As to the actual *field* which the modern idea of rhetoric embraces, it has extended itself beyond the ancient limit, which was confined almost entirely to public speaking, or oratory, properly so called, and has taken in the art of prose composition, and even some kinds of literature, in addition to the art of public speaking. It has come to signify, in general terms, the art by which one communicates thought by means of language, to other minds. But it must have a limit. It cannot include all kinds of literature. It cannot include logic, or poetry, or philosophy, or science strictly so called. It is not itself so truly a science as an art. It is an art which is or should be

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<sup>1</sup> Quin. Instit., B. ii. c. xx. s. 4.



founded on a scientific basis—on the science of thinking or logic ; and on the science of intellectual philosophy. But it must confine itself more especially to that species of composition which relates to the means of popular persuasion, to the art of discourse, and which belongs, directly or indirectly, to the business of the public speaker. It also legitimately includes all that literary and dialectic training which fits one to be powerful in speech, whether he speaks in the popular assembly, the court, or the pulpit. The education of the speaker or orator in these days comprehends, of course, a wider field than in the ancient days, especially if he is a preacher of the great truths of Christianity ; yet, after all, the area of the rhetorical art, though enlarged, is essentially the same as of old. It continues to be in the main a formal science, having to do more exclusively with the regulation of the form and method of public speech than with the materials of thought or contents of speech. It is now, as then, the art of public speaking for the purpose of persuasion ; and we would give the following as a definition of rhetoric, applying to ancient times as well as to the present : Rhetoric is that art or science, which has chiefly to do with the laws that regulate public discourse ; and it properly comprehends all that necessarily goes to make up the education, training, and true power of the public speaker. The principal term in this definition—"discourse"—may be itself thus defined : " In rhetoric, a discourse, in its widest acceptance, is a series of sentences and arguments arranged according to the rules of art, with a view of producing some impression on the mind or feelings of those to whom it is addressed. In logic this term is applied to the third operation of the mind, commonly called reasoning."

**Rhetoric  
defined.**

*Eloquence* is a term allied to that of rhetoric, but differing from it, as a gift, or a power, differs from an art.

**Eloquence  
in its  
relation  
to rhetoric.**

Rhetoric is indeed the art of eloquence ; but rhetoric is not eloquence. Eloquence comes nearer to the source of true power or to the human speaker himself ; while rhetoric has more to do with the means which that speaker employs, or with the language and form of discourse. Eloquence is to be regarded as a gift of nature rather than an art of rhetoric. It belongs to a man's personality, and to those powers of persuasion with which God originally endowed him.

But what, more specifically, is eloquence ? It is derived from "*e-loqui*" "to speak out," as it were to speak from the inmost strength, the deepest convictions, the central personality of the orator. It is the power of the soul manifesting itself in speech to move and sway other souls. It is an original power, however cultivated, rather than an acquired skill.

Many definitions or descriptions of eloquence have been given, and we will mention some of these, so that from

**Various  
definitions  
of eloquence.**

them it will be more easy to come at a comprehensive idea of this great power which has always exerted, and always will exert, so mighty an influence in the world. For a more general conception Tacitus' description of the orator might suffice : "*Is est orator qui de omni questione pulchre, et ornate, et ad persuadendum apte dicere, pro dignitate rerum, ad utilitatem temporum, cum voluptate audientium possit.*"<sup>1</sup> The true orator is one who is able to speak upon every subject with a diction pure, elegant, fitted to persuade, according to the im-

<sup>1</sup> " Dialogue upon Orators," xxx.

portance of the theme, the fitness of the occasion, and with pleasure to his hearers.

Milton's definition of, or more properly allusion to, eloquence, in his "*Smectymnuus*" is this: "True eloquence I find to be none but a serious and hearty love of truth—of a mind fully possessed with the purpose to infuse truth into the minds of others;" and he adds that "that is most eloquent which turns and approaches nearest to nature;" and again he says, "True eloquence is the daughter of virtue. Great acts and great eloquence go commonly hand in hand."

The illustrious French Parliamentary orator, La Bruyère, gives this definition of eloquence: "The gift of the soul which makes one the master of the mind and heart of others, and enables him to inspire them as he wills, or to move them to do what he pleases." Dr. Webster's definition is, "The ability to utter strong emotions in an elevated and forceful manner." Craig's view of eloquence is similar to Webster's, viz., that it "represents the strong emotion in the speaker adapted to excite corresponding emotion in the hearer—that it comprehends also fluency, grace, good delivery, and animated action."

Rees' definition is, "The art of representing our thoughts and feelings in precise form and elegance, and the illuminating of the reason by the colors of the imagination." Professor Goodrich simply called eloquence "the power of persuasion." Professor H. N. Day calls it "the power of fluent and continuous expression." Goldwin Smith's definition is, "The fusion of reason in the fire of passion." Ralph Waldo Emerson's description is, "Eloquence is the appropriate organ of the highest personal energy;" and again he says, "Eloquence is to take sovereign possession of an audience." Vinet defines eloquence to be "the power of sympathy

in speech, or, of communicating thought and feeling by apprehending the condition of the hearer's mind, and by so chording in with his thought that a certain magnetic union of minds is evolved, in which the hearer's mind is penetrated with new life and power."<sup>1</sup>

Each of the definitions which have been given contains some truth, and sets forth some essential quality of eloquence, such as fluency, imagination, feeling, the highest or the lowest quality ; but of all these definitions Vinet's is the most comprehensive and therefore the most true ; because it brings into view not only the truth that eloquence is exerted through speech, or that language is its instrument, and that it implies fluency, vividness of the imaginative faculties, a condensed elegance of style, and a precise and clear logical method ; but it also emphasizes the still more important truth that in genuine eloquence *sympathy* between the speaker and his audience is awaked. It is the power of soul upon soul, the reciprocity of intellectual and emotional influence, so that the thoughts and feelings of the speaker are communicated as by a magnetic power to the hearer, and the two for the time are made morally and spiritually one, by the fusing power of the truth uttered in the fire of a strong purpose. If we add to this the idea of persuasion, that this sympathetic union evolved is sufficient to bear the understanding and will before it as by a torrent's force, and to lead to real belief, choice, and action, then, it seems to us, we have got as near the complete idea of eloquence as we can do. The real force of eloquence is thus seen to reside in the essential qualities and the inmost affections and energies of the soul, which are perhaps rarely aroused to their depths, but

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<sup>1</sup> " Homiletics," p. 23.



which, when they are aroused, and when they do find expression in any adequate form of words, produce the great effects of eloquence.

It may be seen, therefore, that, though cognate terms, and occurring often in the same relations, Rhetoric differs from Eloquence as an art differs from a power which is exerted through that art ; and that however we define eloquence, the definition which we have given of rhetoric cannot be greatly disparaged. There assuredly must be and is an art which has to do peculiarly with the power and success of the public speaker, and which has its bearing upon his eloquence itself ; and this art is the art of rhetoric. Emerson says, " The conscious utterance of thought, by speech or action to any end, is art." He who speaks must have an end in view, and must train himself for speaking so as to speak effectively, to attain his object ; and whatever tends directly to give effectiveness to a public speaker, whether it is in the cultivation of the reasoning faculty, or the study of language and style, or even elocutionary discipline, is therefore fairly included in the art of rhetoric.

But modern ideas of rhetoric have improved upon the ancient more in their intrinsic conception of rhetoric than in the extent of its appropriate field ; and yet it is wonderful how the ideas of Aristotle and Plato, who represent the two poles of the human intellect, continue to control the world of philosophy and art. Some modern writers on rhetoric incline to the lower Aristotelian view, that it is strictly an art of persuasion ; that truth is but one of the means or instruments of persuasion, and that rhetoric has little or nothing to do, intrinsically, with virtue or vice, truth or error : most writers, however, incline to the profounder Platonic view, that rhetoric must have a moral ground-

work ; and Christianity deepens this moral idea of art, and makes acts of words—acts full of moral significance and choice.

Whately, in the structure of his mind, was an Aristotelian, although his purer morality and Christian culture served in many ways to modify and elevate his views ; but he looks upon rhetoric, and logic also, as purely instrumental arts, “ though applicable to various kinds of subject-matter, which do not properly come under them.”<sup>1</sup> The materials of thought, or the moral groundwork of the oration, he does not consider as belonging at all to rhetoric ; but he confines rhetoric entirely to the method of employing these materials. It is the art of handling the tools, whatever the work may be. Rhetoric is the best way to persuade men to think as we do. Looking upon it in this light, he defines rhetoric to be “ the art of argumentative composition ;”<sup>2</sup> and his treatise is mostly taken up with discussing the mode of constructing an argument so as effectually to subdue the reason, passion, and will. It is a good digest of rules upon the composition of arguments.

Theremin, a thorough Platonist, holds that, though rhetoric is essentially an art, or something instrumental to the attainment of an end not in itself, and that, though it has to do with the form rather than the material about which it is employed, yet that eloquence is at least one of the fundamental powers in man ; and that it has its root in his moral nature. He holds that the subject-matter of eloquence must always be *τὸ ἀληθές*—the truth. He terms eloquence—as did, indeed, Quintilian and some of the older writers—“ a

<sup>1</sup> “ Elements of Rhetoric” (Monroe’s ed.), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p. 21.

virtue ;" and he regards it as directly springing from those moral qualities in the speaker and in the hearer which underlie the mere form or art of the speech itself. Every element of rhetoric, considering it to be the "art of eloquence"—such as the law of adaptation, the law of progress, the law of vivacity, the law of clearness, etc.—he develops from some principle in the ethical nature of man ; which view certainly ennobles rhetorical studies, for it leads the speaker to look into himself for power, rather than to any acquired skill. We shall, in a moment, look at this a little more carefully, but that Theremin's view has some truth in it may be seen from the classic orators themselves, although they may have been built upon a shallower idea of their own art. It came out in their discourse, because as men they were greater than their theories. The moral power of Demosthenes was strikingly shown in his superiority to the mere skill, or artifice (however extraordinary), of his rival, Æschines. Supposing their intellectual acumen to have been the same, the arguments of Demosthenes were generally drawn from universal principles of truth and right as they existed not only in himself but in his hearers ; therefore Demosthenes was the greater orator, and triumphed because truth and right were stronger powers than their opposites. Should rhetoric, or eloquence, even, be considered as nothing more than an art, *that* does not alter the truth of the assertion that it must have an ethical foundation ; for every true art must have this. Why has the art of sculpture, which is but the skill of a man to hew an inanimate block of stone into a certain shape, exerted such a living influence on the world ? Why have its great masters—Phidias, Michael Angelo, and Canova—been real powers ? It is because they were great men themselves ; and in their works they drew from

the depths of their spiritual nature. Michael Angelo's colossal statue of Moses is a highly ethical work, representing the author's ideal conception of the grandeur, unchangeableness, and majesty of the moral law. Feeling, intense reverence, deep meditation on the character of God, are combined in this production ; it is unspoken eloquence. Eloquent speech, far more than such a cold art as sculpture, is something which must flow from the depths of the moral nature and character. As far as one is a true man, and is in agreement with the law of truth which rules man, and which is perfect in the mind of God, so far his speech will be the expression of the truth which is in him ; if not, it is false eloquence and false rhetoric. If there is no depth to a man, no inward harmony with the truth, he cannot possibly be an eloquent man, though he may be a skillful and plausible pleader ; for truth alone is eloquent, because it finds its correspondence in every man's conscience and heart, and because truth can be advocated and defended only by truth, in the spirit of truth.

While the theory of Theremin, that "eloquence is a virtue" when stated in this bare and unmodified form, may be an unscientific statement, which fails

**Theremin's  
theory that  
eloquence  
is a virtue.**

to recognize the real distinction between a species of art and a principle of ethics, and would be therefore inconvenient for use in accurate scientific discussion ; yet this theory aims to express a substantial truth, which might be correctly and even scientifically expressed somewhat in this form : that true eloquence, or the highest kind of eloquence, has necessary relations to ethical principles. The oldest rhetoricians—Aristotle himself first of all—enunciated the axiom that the orator must be a good man. Aristotle spoke of the importance of *ἠθικὴ πίστις* (moral con-



viction) in that part of the orator's work which was inartificial ; this weighty saying of antiquity that the " orator must be a good man " still has weight, and has been developed into a system by Theremin. It has weight because eloquence, as we have seen, is mainly personal, and springs principally from the soul. If the soul's character be in harmony with truth, the expression of the soul in speech will carry with it the superadded power of truth, of virtue, and thus be eloquent. Emerson says, " The key-note of Demosthenes' orations is this, ' virtue secures its own success ; ' " and he further says, in relation to all art, including that of eloquence : " Proceeding from absolute mind, whose nature is goodness as much as truth, the great workers of art are always attuned to moral nature ; " and he puts forth this idea in an aphorism which comprehends the whole subject: " If the earth and sea conspire with virtue more than vice, so do the masterpieces of art. " <sup>1</sup>

As the substance of eloquence is truth, or, as eloquence has to do with the enunciation and manifestation of truth, so no positively untrue or bad man can be in the highest sense eloquent. He may be an apt pleader, a debater skillful at making the worse appear the better cause, but he cannot accomplish the results of the highest rhetorical art, because he cannot appeal, with entire strength and conviction, to the principles of truth in the human breast. These are necessary principles ; and true eloquence, as well as all true art, rests on the foundation of what is necessary. God in the nature of things has made truth more powerful than untruth. Thus we see that even bad men, in order to persuade or to use the eloquence of persuasion, have to appear to be good, to " feign a virtue if

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<sup>1</sup> " Society and Solitude."

they have it not." They employ good means to the attainment of bad or selfish ends. In the fervid discussions at the time of the French revolution, in periods of religious persecution, when in the name of religion men have been urged to tyrannical measures and acts, and even in frequent cases of private criminality, the appeal has invariably been made to arguments based on moral principles. There is another point, also, to be noticed in this subject. We have seen that the true sphere of eloquence is the common thought and sympathy of all, or that it must be a production of the universal soul; that it must appeal to the common sentiment, conscience, and heart; now this common sympathy can only be realized in the deeper and essential principles of our nature—in those universal principles of justice, right, goodness, and truth, upon which our moral nature is founded. This illustrates the old saying that you can only make a man believe what he believed before—what, in fact, God created him to believe.

It is true that many positively controvert this view that eloquence has ethical foundations. Pascal was of the opinion that eloquence was purely an instrument, merely a skill of persuasive speech that might lend itself indifferently to good or to evil. Now there is undoubtedly a power of persuasion often given to evil which is great and vastly injurious, because it weaves itself in with the corrupt tendencies of human nature, but that the greater power, the genuine and permanent power of persuasion, remains with good, may be seen especially from three considerations. 1. Truth has a real witness of conviction in a man's own conscience, while evil has not. Truth, not untruth, produces repentance and remorse. This powerful and intuitive plea of conscience adds therefore to the eloquence of truth. It is an ally

of tremendous power. 2. The object of eloquence, or of right speech, logically considered, is truth ; or, more strictly, to free truth from error (a principle taken advantage of sophistically by bad men), therefore eloquence is logically on the side of truth. 3. The greater the confessed persuasive power of evil the greater is the responsibility laid upon truth, or upon those who represent and uphold truth, to plead its cause eloquently and effectively ; to bring out its hidden forces ; to make the truth bear on the conscience, purely and persuasively, so that men shall yield to it and obey it. Therefore there is an added motive of tremendous power which in itself has a mighty influence upon the production of true eloquence.

If it then be true that eloquence, or the art of eloquence, which is rhetoric, if not strictly an ethical science or principle, has ethical foundations ; if it be true that it is so closely related in its sources of power to moral forces ; if it be true that the highest eloquence is inseparable from character in the speaker, and that " the perfection of the orator rests on the perfection of the man ;" then this truth becomes of the greatest importance to the *preacher*, and it applies to him with a significance that it does to no other public speaker. The preacher must be what he speaks :

" Thou must be true thyself,  
If thou the truth wouldst teach."

He must love that Lord whom he proclaims and he must love his fellow-men as himself. He must delight in his inmost mind in the truth ; he must be joined with it, he must be one with it, and he must possess a character of genuine goodness, truth, and righteousness. His spirituality of mind is a prime source of his power. Out from his own soul, brought into harmony with the will and

truth of God, must flow resistless currents of divine persuasion. The purity and strength of his moral purpose is a necessary factor of his success as a preacher.

He, at all events, is not one who speaks to catch the ear, or to produce a temporary sensation, he speaks to make the truth which is in him so vividly seen and so genuinely felt by the hearer, that the hearer shall grasp it and make it an eternal possession. A thorough conviction of the truth and a deathless love of it, are the real sources of eloquence in the preacher. These are summed up in the single word *faith*, which includes both the

divine gift and the human character. Our  
**Faith the** real preaching power. real preaching power is our faith. This was the eloquence of the apostles and of the first Christian preachers. 2 Cor. 4:13,

“We believe, and therefore speak.” This is what Dr. Bushnell calls “the faith-talent:” it is the pure speech of the word speaking in us; it is the utterance of believing and purified souls; for if the orator, according to Plato, must be a good man, how much more the preacher, according to Christ! Is not, indeed, the Christian preacher “that great orator” who, Quintilian said, “had not yet appeared, but who may hereafter appear, and who would be as consummate in goodness as in eloquence.”<sup>1</sup>

Chrysostom, however, severely censured the error of considering the preacher as a mere orator, and he reduced all the eloquence of preaching to this one object—to please God.<sup>2</sup> But to speak God’s will, “to minister in the spirit,” requires an anointing from the Holy One; and the New Testament is full of the application of this (as we think) truly rhetorical principle, that out of his

<sup>1</sup> Instit., B. xii. c. i. s. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Neander’s “Life of Chrysostom,” p. 73.



own character, out of his inward union with the Spirit of truth, springs the preacher's power.

Dr. Bushnell, in his "God in Christ," has an eloquent passage upon the preacher, which ends thus: "The man is to be so united to God, so occupied and possessed by the eternal life, that his acts and words shall be outgoings of a divine power. And exactly this Paul himself declares, when he says, 'And my speech and my preaching was not with persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' And this is the proper, the truly sublime conception of the minister of God. He is not a mere preacher occupying some pulpit, as a stand of natural eloquence, but he is a man whose nature is possessed of God in such a manner that the light of God is seen in him; a man whose life and words are apodictic—a demonstration of the Spirit." These words fairly carry out what we conceive to be a true rhetorical principle, not, indeed, as regards common speakers, but the Christian preacher, viz., "that the preacher of Christ should be filled with the truth and spirit of Christ—should speak "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." And as the highest eloquence is that which affects the will, which is powerful to move and change the will, and to cause the man to do what he hears—surely that eloquence which allies itself with and works with the will-renewing energy of the Holy Spirit is the true eloquence of the preacher.

We end this discussion upon the idea and definition of rhetoric by saying that, although rhetoric must still be considered mainly as an art, or that it has to do with the form more than with the substance of speech, yet it is itself in harmony with and founded upon truth, and derives its power from the great laws and impulses of man's moral nature; it is a free, not a mechanical art. And

this is especially true in the case of the preacher ; every increase in holiness is an increase in power ; and the principle in his case may be carried still higher, and the assertion may be made that no man can be a genuine preacher of God's word who is not in some sense inspired by the

**Rhetoric  
something  
more than  
mere skill.**

Spirit of God. As to the question sometimes asked, Is not rhetoric, after all, a merely mental power or skill, which is afterward deepened by the judgment of the moral sense, or the acceptance by the moral sense of the purely intellectual conclusions of the mind ? That may be true in the technical idea of rhetoric, but in the deeper view of it which we have endeavored to bring out, we would answer, no ; for unless the whole being enters into and goes to make up the orator, his moral as well as intellectual powers, his spirit as well as understanding, he cannot arrive at genuine convictions of truth ; these convictions would not be truly his own, and thus they would not carry the weight with them of personal convictions. Eloquence is the breath and force of the man's personality. It is the whole being of a man speaking. Cicero said that "one might simulate philosophy, but not eloquence." Eloquence is something more than mere art ; it lies in the depths of moral character. "*L'éloquence est en elle-même un trait du caractère plutôt qu'un don intellectuel.*"<sup>1</sup>

### SEC. 23. *Uses and Sources of Rhetoric.*

Notwithstanding the noble utility of the rhetorical art rightly understood, there are popular objections to the preacher's study of rhetoric, which it is worth while to consider. These objections may be comprised in some

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<sup>1</sup> Vinet's " Histoire de la Prédication des Réformés," p. 673.

general statement like this : The rules of rhetoric necessarily contain that which is wholly human and artificial, and they thus render the study of rhetoric unworthy of the simplicity of the preacher of divine truth, who depends on the truth itself, and on the Holy Spirit, for the true results of preaching.

Objections  
to the study  
of rhetoric.

Even the true orator, it is said, is one who trusts more to nature than to art, and who has the least of art in his eloquence ; and, *à fortiori*, how much more should this be the case with the preacher of divine truth !

In one sense the rules of rhetoric are artificial, because they concern the art of speaking ; but they are not artificial in the common sense of the term, as meaning what is false. True rhetoric is drawn from truth and nature. It is the discovery of the genuine laws of persuasive speech among living men ; and it is simply reducing these to definite principles. It is the study of the best ways which nature employs to communicate and impress truth.

Without doubt the study of rhetoric has been conducted sometimes upon narrow principles and in too critical a spirit. It has been looked upon simply as an art of speaking and writing, or as a digest of rules. It has been treated negatively rather than positively, destructively rather than constructively. It has been dissociated from the springs of thought, from the science of mind. It has been unintelligently separated from logic, metaphysics, and those sciences that have to do with the laws of thought, as well as from ethical sciences. If rhetoric is form, it is the form of the mind ; if it is expression, it is the expression of thought ; and we cannot rightly separate the effect from its cause, the result from its source, without rendering the treatment of the whole subject shallow and mechanical, and without losing sight of the deepest

springs of eloquence. Rhetoric is a genuine art, full of help to the speaker, and of suggestive power, if but looked upon in its right relations ; if viewed in the broader light of what is a true art, and of what true art, universally speaking, signifies.

The study of rhetoric should lead to the enriching of the inventive faculty, which lies at the source of style, and should not be taken up exclusively in formal detail and grammatical minutiae. Rhetoric is useful, it is true, in merely regulating the form and method of discourse, but if it does nothing else, if it has no stimulating and developing influence upon the faculty of discourse itself, its value is diminished,

But it is sometimes said, Why not leave rhetoric to nature ? This man and that man are self-taught orators, who never studied a volume on eloquence. The more rules, the less eloquence. It is true there are men of native eloquence who have not studied the art in books ; but they have studied it in men, in nature, in themselves. This has been the case with many distinguished Methodist preachers ; they have been keen students of the most effective use of motives and arguments, and even of gestures and tones, upon the passions. There is nothing artificial about that. That is nature's way ; that is really seeking the truth and the true power of eloquent speech. It is true that the art of rhetoric will not make an ineloquent man eloquent ; this is not the teacher's work, and is beyond his ability. Rhetoric will, however, make an effective speaker more effective, and will enable any man of good abilities to become a good writer and speaker. " If you suppose either to be independent of the other, nature will be able to do much without learning, but learning will be of no avail without the assistance of nature. But if they



be united in equal points, I shall be inclined to think that, when both are but moderate, the influence of nature is nevertheless the greater ; but finished orators, I consider, owe more to learning than to nature.”<sup>1</sup>

Rhetoric, as we have said, ought not to be separated from thought, from the creative faculty, since it is then cut off from its highest spring ; but supposing it to be true that rhetoric will not furnish a man with thoughts, yet it will teach a man how to use his thoughts ; and a mind that will be killed by good rules of speaking and writing cannot be a strong mind, and such a mind would be made pedantic by any kind of knowledge.

It is barely possible that rhetorical studies may somewhat repress natural freedom, and there may be a sense of art or artificiality produced ; but this must soon wear off when the study is rightly conducted, and when a man is resolved by every means to make himself an effective speaker. He will go through art into nature, and be all the stronger.

And what, truly, should there be in this study, rightly conducted, to injure the simplicity of the preacher? This term “simplicity,” as used in the New Testament, signifies “freedom from guile,” and “singleness of heart and purpose,” or, in a wider sense, “the unperverted teaching of the gospel,” rather than intellectual simplicity or barrenness. The preacher’s rhetorical study is to aid him to give the truth its true force, to clear it of what is false, and to present it in its real simplicity and strength to the mind. “The foolishness of preaching” is not “foolish preaching,” but what was esteemed foolish by the Greeks in opposition to their “wisdom,” viz., “the preaching of the cross.” It was

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<sup>1</sup> Quintilian’s “Institutes,” B. ii. c. xix.

not the preaching, but the subject of the preaching, that was foolish.

But, it may be said, if the preacher uses the aids of rhetoric, and strives to make himself an eloquent speaker, does he not put himself on the same level with the platform-speaker? The difference between the pulpit and platform is deeper than a mere rhetorical difference; for the preacher may use all the art and skill that the platform-speaker does, and still be a preacher and not a platform-orator. The great difference between the two is, that the eloquence of the platform-speaker ends in itself: he has shown his power, or he has gained his point; but the eloquence of the preacher ends in the good and salvation of his hearers; it is no merely personal or temporary object. The platform-speaker strives for the present mastery, amusement, instruction, or conviction of his hearers, and human powers and eloquence are sufficient for the production of that effect; but the aim of the true preacher is something out of himself, something enduring and eternal, something permanent in its effect upon the character of the soul. He needs more than his own powers for this; he needs something more than human eloquence.

But if the preacher needs more than human eloquence, he still may not despise anything that will make him effective as a preacher. Nathan's preaching to David was a piece of pure rhetoric. It was the polished arrow that slew the king's sin and saved his soul from its deadly coil. Paul's use of the illustration of the Athenian altar was a skillful use of the law of adaptation in rhetoric; and did it injure the moral simplicity of his speaking? Apollos was, undoubtedly, well trained in the rhetorical schools of Alexandria. "In some respects Apollos was distinguished from the other disciples of

John the Baptist. There is much significance in the fact that is stated that he was 'born at Alexandria.' He was not only an Alexandrian Jew by birth, but he had a high reputation for an eloquent (*λόγιος* 'eloquent' rather than learned) and forcible power of speaking, and had probably been well trained in the rhetorical schools on the banks of the Nile. But though he was endued with the eloquence of a Greek orator, the subjects of his study and teaching were the Scriptures of his forefathers. The character which he had borne in the synagogues was that of a man 'mighty in the Scriptures.' In addition to these advantages of birth and education, he seems to have had the fullest and most systematic instruction in the gospel which a disciple of John could possibly receive. Whether from the Baptist himself, or from some of those who travelled into other lands with his teaching as their possession, Apollos had received full and accurate instruction 'in the way of the Lord.' We are further told that his character was marked by a fervent zeal in spreading the truth. Thus we may conceive of him as travelling, like a second Baptist, beyond the frontiers of Judæa, expounding the prophecies of the Old Testament, announcing that the times of the Messiah were come, and calling the Jews to repentance in the spirit of Elias. Hence he was, like his great teacher, 'preparing the way of the Lord.' Though ignorant of the momentous facts which had succeeded the Resurrection and Ascension, he was turning the 'hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,' and 'making ready a people for the Lord,' whom he was soon to know 'more perfectly.' Thus, burning with zeal and confidence by the truth of what he had learned, he spoke out boldly in the synagogue."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conybeare and Howson's "Life of St. Paul," v. ii. p. 6.

Was the rhetorical education or the "eloquence" of Apollos, we ask, of no influence upon the early progress of the gospel in the earth, or at least in its preparation to come in power to the nations?

Upham, in his volume on "The Interior Life," has some interesting remarks upon the proofs that our blessed Saviour himself valued mental culture, and that in his human nature he prepared himself for the work of his ministry by thought and study of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

Rhetorical studies, it cannot be denied, are useful to the preacher in so far as preaching is an art. The art of oratory has always been cultivated in the Church, as we have seen that Augustine wrote a treatise on "Sacred Rhetoric." Melancthon also composed a treatise upon the oratorical art, as applied to preaching, advocating the use of learning and the cultivation of eloquence by the preacher. The age of the Reformation, as has been already said, was a period of marked eloquence in the pulpit.

In regard to the most important bearing of the objection in regard to the converting power of divine truth accompanied by the Holy Spirit, as being essential, and as being sometimes lost sight of when eloquence is too much esteemed—this certainly does apply in full force to all *false* ideas of preaching, where the human element is made prominent, and the divine element is made subordinate, or is disregarded; and yet the fact of the converting power of divine truth, or that all renewing power is in God alone, does not do away with the value of human preaching. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the in-

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<sup>1</sup> "Interior Life," p. 243.



crease." The real power—the ultimate power—is in the divine causation, and yet the human instrumentality is not excluded. It is true that if God does not aid the preacher, his best efforts are vain ; and if God also does not animate and fill with his Spirit the organization of the Church, the Church is a useless body ; yet this is not saying that the preacher and the Church are not needed, and that these agencies may not, and should not, put forth all the effort, talent, and power they possess, relying on divine aid. If one should carry the objection to an unreasonable extent, then human agency in the conversion of men would be excluded, and all means employed for men's salvation—prayer as well as preaching—would be vain. This has been the theory of some who have pushed their views to an extravagant pitch. In the New England theological controversy on "the means of grace," half a century since, it was asserted on the one side that the text "Consider thy ways" was addressed to every man as a rational and moral being, who must think upon his duty before he did it ; on the other side it was regarded as a thing impossible, or, at least, inadmissible, for an impenitent sinner to consider his ways, because his thoughts would be depraved, and only depraved continually, and no benefit, but only evil, would come of it. But human effort in the line of truth and duty, and for the furtherance and proclamation of the truth, is clearly set forth in the Scriptures. Not only did the apostles preach, but the seventy, and others who were not endowed with miraculous gifts ; and all believers are to preach, in one sense. If we object to preaching, we might object to all other kinds of influence exerted to promote religion, and diffuse truth among man. But if we admit preaching, it should be the best—the best that our human powers, aided by culture and divine grace, and intent

upon the building up of the kingdom of God in the world, can produce. The simplicity of truth, and its converting power, are destroyed, not by its running through the human medium, but by its deliberate falsification for selfish and earthly ends. As one is not defiled by eating with unwashed hands, but is defiled by having an unclean heart, so the truth is not corrupted by being taken into sinful human hands, and thus dispensed ; but it is corrupted by passing through an unbelieving and false mind. And the simplicity of the truth may be also injured by the preacher's trusting to his own eloquence to produce conviction, and not to the Word and Spirit of God. But no true preacher does this ; for he considers the gift of God to be intrusted to an earthen vessel " that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." He trusts wholly to the divine Spirit.

What, then, to the preacher of divine truth, are some of the legitimate uses of rhetoric ?

1. It cultivates and develops the power of discourse. We have already defined what true discourse is ; even if rhetoric be essentially a science of form, and do not itself produce or have regard to the materials for public discourse, yet it is directly connected with the laws of thought, and if it be but an instrument of discourse, it is at the same time the instrument of a discoursing mind ; for discourse is the perfect development of an idea of some intuitive truth, or of some truth of which the mind has possessed itself. Now rhetoric—which is the art of embodying ideas in language for the purpose of persuasion—is the exercise of that original power of discourse with which man is gifted. And can it be said that the cultivation of the art of rhetoric has no influence to cultivate the original power ? It must have a great influence in this respect. It tends

**Uses of  
rhetoric to  
preachers.**

to increase the creative power of the mind. There is no exercise better fitted to develop the productive powers than public speaking, if of the right sort. It draws from the deepest sources. It concentrates the mental powers ; it forces thought ; it cultivates the faculty of expression ; it clears and enlarges the spring of thoughtful discourse, and makes it more abounding.

2. It gives accuracy to logical processes.

Rhetoric aids one to become master of his mind and of his mental resources ; to regulate his processes of thought ; to start them readily from certain fixed centres, and to follow them along certain defined lines. The mind is not only invigorated by the study of rhetoric and logic, but it acquires thereby a finer edge. A trained rhetorician who is also a logician (for the two should go together) will not be apt to lay hold of the wrong end or the tough end of a question first, but he will advance upon it with an increasing force and impetus that carry him through its difficulties. A proper arrangement and method in thinking aids one to think. No extent of knowledge or brilliancy of imagination can make up for inaccurate habits of thought. In order to write or speak well, one must first think well. He must know how to analyze, to resolve a subject into its parts, to search its depths. The preacher should have depth as well as breadth. He should aim first at true thinking, and then he will come to original thinking ; for rhetoric, while it regulates thought, does not repress originality.

3. It opens the power of language.

The use of language is a fit study for the preacher, whose duty it is to interpret the meaning and force of the words chosen by the Holy Spirit to communicate truth. "The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words." Language is thought's instrument. By it we not only

communicate light, but life, to other minds. Through language, soul acts on soul. A preacher should understand the hidden powers of language ; and here, perhaps, is one of the failures of the modern pulpit. The old preachers, especially the old English divines, were men of vast learning, who knew and felt the force of language ; as also did such preachers as Bunyan and Flavel, who were not scholars, yet had attained to extraordinary vigor and purity of idiomatic English. The sermons of Bishop Andrews, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, are wonderful for their nervous Saxon English.

Rhetoric comprises the whole field of linguistic and literary criticism—the rich field of language, of the mighty power of words as the instrument of thought ; and the most skillful and powerful use of language can be acquired only through the study of this wide and varied field.

4. It increases the power of persuasion or the ability of the speaker to carry conviction to other minds.

Whately makes a just observation when he says that true rhetoric is not “*an* art of producing conviction, but it is *the* art of doing so.” It is finding out, not the best, but the only way by which conviction must be produced. It is, in Whately’s language, “investigating the causes of the success of all who do produce conviction in writing and speaking.”<sup>1</sup>

5. It prevents the waste of mental energy.

Many preachers, though fertile in thought, are troubled in arranging their materials. They are apt to go over too much ground. Their ideas are not sufficiently compacted ; they are ineffectively marshalled, making a mob and not an army. Their sermons often are theological

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<sup>1</sup> Whately’s “ Rhetoric,” sec. 4.



treatises, small books. They waste their mental store, and do not get a due return for their outlay. Rhetoric teaches us how to husband our resources ; how to methodize and condense ; how to make the most of what we have ; how to say enough upon a subject, and to say it forcibly.

6. It prevents the preacher's usefulness from being destroyed by little things.

Preachers of genuine zeal and good abilities are often hindered in their usefulness by some insignificant thing, of which the simplest rhetorical culture would make them aware. Inaptness or inversion of style, a grotesque or awkward delivery, an unfortunate gesture, a nasal twang, a dryness or dulness in the treatment of vital themes—some little thing, which could be remedied, will keep a good and perhaps able man tied like a slave to the wheel all his life.

Let us now consider some of the sources of rhetoric. They are threefold : Nature, Good Models, and Books.

(1.) Nature. The preacher may learn from a child the first principles of the laws of rhetoric, *e.g.*, the essential principle of directness.

Sources of  
rhetoric :  
Nature.

A little child, in making his wants known, and in carrying his point, will use the most direct method. He will express his wish in the fewest words. He will employ the strongest argument or motive which he is capable of employing, and which (how often it happens !) is strong enough to carry his point. Where there is a pressure on the mind of the humblest and rudest person, there is often a vivid force in his way of expressing himself, which is eloquent. A poor woman who has five minutes allowed her at your door will make her case stand in the strongest light ; for she will say nothing unessential, or will leave nothing essential unsaid ; she will

arrange her story (her oration) in a way fitted to produce instant conviction, arouse pity, and gain her end.

Nature is to be studied in common men. The words and arguments of men engaged in the common business of life, if they have less abstruse depth, have often more practical weight and point than those of the most highly educated men, in whose minds the varied and abstract relations of a given truth habitually present themselves. The expressions of such men have a rough, powerful rhetoric. General Sheridan's famous speech at the fight of Winchester was a thousand times more effective than all the fine-turned sentences that were ever elaborated. President Lincoln's address at Gettysburg is a noble example of the eloquent condensation of thought and sentiment there may be in brief and simple language. The man who is always living in books, and upon dead men's thoughts, should strive to catch something of this homely, vivid force of living men's every-day words and ideas. Above all, he should study his own nature, as a source of rhetorical knowledge and power. He should carefully watch his own mind, and observe how he is affected by the arguments of others, and by what kind of arguments; what are the motives which move him most deeply and reach him most quickly; what forms of expression are most striking, and what most pathetic; he should ask himself how, when, and why he is most moved by the speaking of others, and what kind of speakers most move him.

(2.) Good models. Living models are best, because they come nearest to nature. Some preachers frequent

Good models.	the courts to study the most direct modes of persuasive reasoning; yet their best models are preachers. By a study of true models we tend imperceptibly to grow like them; as, if
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one should gaze half an hour every day upon the Apollo Belvedere, he would show it in the carriage of his head, and the new dignity which would be breathed into his whole mien. But in studying models, it is only the general result that should be aimed at, and not the minute, literal copy. "*Turpe etiam illud est, contentum esse id consequi quod imiteris.*"<sup>1</sup> Every one should jealously guard his individuality, and should diligently strive to retain his natural style, that good thing, that native force or facility which belongs to him, only corrected of its faults, and enriched by good examples. No orator or preacher, let him be the greatest, is indeed a perfect model for our imitation, or combines in himself all excellences ; neither is any great orator or speaker, as Quintilian has truly said, imitable in those things—his genius, invention, force, facility—which especially make him great ; for those things are inborn, individual, spiritual, and escape the power of all imitation.

One should not only read the sermons of the best preachers, but study them, analyze them, sentence by sentence and word by word ; searching patiently, laboriously, determinedly, to come at their sources of power. It is a good plan to take a condensed writer like Bishop Butler, and, after reading a page two or three times, to rewrite it in our own language, and carefully note the differences in the two modes of expressing the same ideas. Thus we should experiment and experiment, till we catch something of the condensed energy of one, the perspicuity of another, the fire of another. And, not confining ourselves to the study of the best writers and speakers in our own profession, we may extend our critical reading to the historian, the poet, the orators of antiquity, and

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Quintilian's "Instit.," B. x. c. ii. s. I, "De Imitatione."

to all the fields of literature. The study of Shakespeare is a spring of endlessly fruitful suggestion in the art of composition. A young preacher might always have on hand some author, and especially religious author, of the first excellence, not only as regards matter, but style ; for the formation of a clear, forcible style is a severe process ; and as no man can learn to paint without a continual use of the brush, so no man can learn to write and speak well without a continual use of the pen.

(3.) Books. We have anticipated this source of rhetorical instruction and suggestion under the last head ; but

we refer now more particularly to books

**Books.** upon the special art of rhetoric. No treatise upon rhetoric, ancient or modern, exceeds in completeness or in value Quintilian's " Institutions." Even now, as in Martial's line, it may be justly said : "*Quintiliane vagæ moderator sermone juventæ.*" His great work in twelve books is built upon a most comprehensive plan, embracing the preliminary training and education of the orator ; the nature or substance of the rhetorical art ; invention and arrangement ; composition and delivery ; those philosophical and ethical principles to which oratory is related ; the character of the orator ; and the collateral studies and arts to be pursued for a thorough training of the perfect orator. All are treated with great fulness, energy, and elegance of language ; and, as has been remarked, modern works have added but little to what Quintilian and other classic writers have given us upon this art ; for though in science we excel the ancients, in art they remain our masters and teachers. In addition to works on homiletics in various languages, there

are especially the sermons of great preachers,

**Sermons.** both of modern and ancient times, which represent the different types and epochs of preaching, in



various languages, and which form in themselves an ample field of homiletical literature and study.

Whatever there is in philosophy and literature which has to do with the orator's power may be studied to advantage ; but above all, let the young preacher strive to gain a thorough homiletical training, not trusting entirely to books or to the teacher, but availing himself of every suggestion, from every source, to improve himself in the art of preaching. And, after all, the greatest source of rhetorical power and rhetorical training is speaking. Practice in preaching is the best way to make the good preacher. He who would hit the mark must shoot at the mark. He who would move men by preaching must preach so as to move them. He who would overcome the difficulties of preaching must meet them in the presence of living men, in the act of speaking, on the field where difficulties present themselves. Brains, too, are as useful now as ever in preaching, and must be "mixed in," as the painter said, with the work ; and so are heart, and love, and faith, essential ; and no rhetoric can take the place of the persuasion of the Holy Spirit, that "oratory of God," which, as old Fuller says, "alone convinces souls."

#### SEC. 24. *Uses of Reasoning to the Preacher.*

So far as reasoning comes under the department of Rhetoric (and Whately, we have seen, makes rhetoric to consist mainly of the art of reasoning, or to be identical with it) ; and inasmuch as logic, in the present enlarged conception of the term, is held to be the science of the laws of thought, and includes in it all the forms and methods of thinking, the true idea of our mental conceptions and judgments, and the principles of right reasoning ; it becomes essential to the preacher to consider this, or at

least to be stimulated to the careful study of this manly science. We would aim only to indicate the importance of this study to the preacher, as a legitimate source of power.

Coleridge's definition of reason, derived, doubtless, from Schelling and the German philosophy, is useful and ennobling to the preacher, who has to deal with those truths which are apprehended through the exercise of the highest faculties of the being. "Reason is the power by which we are enabled to draw from particular and contingent appearances universal and necessary conclusions."<sup>1</sup>

As further explained, reason is the prime source of necessary and universal ideas—ideas which are above the changing world of sense; it is, in fine, the faculty that deals with pure ideas, and it appeals to itself alone, to its own intuitions and judgments, as the substance and ground of ideas. It is thus, according to Coleridge, that faculty in man which rises above the sphere of the mere intellect judging by sense, or the logical understanding, and enables him to arrive at absolute truths. Kant and his school made this distinction between formal logic in the sense that it exhibits only the laws of analytical knowledge, or which treats of the processes of thinking apart from real knowledge or being, and the criterion of the pure reason which inquires into the possibility of a universally valid synthetic knowledge—thus drawing a distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments.<sup>2</sup> The higher reason pierces through phenomena or things as they seem, and comes to know things as they are. It is

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge's Works (Shedd's ed.), v. i. p. 251, *et al.*

<sup>2</sup> Ueberweg's "Logic."

able to arrive at the realities of things, and the very grounds of their existence. It seeks for a uniform and unchangeable basis of truth.

Taking care not to let this transcendental definition of reason usurp the place of that higher teaching or inward communication of the Holy Spirit, by which alone we can spiritually, and thus truly, comprehend divine truth, we do indeed perceive that there is in man a higher nature, that transcends the mere logical intellect. It is a faculty which judges *à priori*, which is capable of grasping absolute ideas, and which, to a certain extent, possesses intuitive insight. In the world of faith, and in the discussion of Christian truth, this higher exercise of the reason is important, for Christianity is a rational religion ; that is, it corresponds to those universal laws and principles of truth that raise themselves above change, that are common to rational intelligences, and that are fixed in the constitution of things. We should not be afraid of reason—that is, of this higher conception of reason—in the things of faith. If reason alone cannot arrive at divine truth, or truly comprehend it, divine truth, nevertheless, speaks to the highest reason in man, and lets itself down, as far as it can, into its congenial and assimilated sphere. And as “the word,” *ὁ λόγος*, of which the preacher is the servant and minister, is, above all, the divine reason, the preacher should know the place and functions of reason ; for he cannot keep divine truth confined in the arena of the mere understanding ; it will burst from human definitions and propositions ; it will not abide the test of mere word-argument ; it cannot be discovered by the syllogistic method. It may indeed be methodized and systematized, and thus more easily be grasped by the logical faculty ; but it belongs rather to the sphere of more purely rational ideas, of “rationalized

intellect," in which, through the power of holy contemplation, in communion with the mind and spirit of God, the truth is clearly known. And the preacher should endeavor to evoke this higher faculty of reason in the hearer. He should strive to show that there is no real conflict between faith and reason, but that the truths of faith, which belong to a world above the natural and sensuous, appeal to that power in man which apprehends rational and universal truths—truths eternal as God's nature. Such reasoning, therefore, as this, which calls into exercise the highest nature of man, is the prerogative of the preacher of divine truth. This is his noble province, peculiar to him. And in all lower kinds of reasoning, as it is commonly understood, in which the formal or logical understanding may be chiefly employed, the preacher should never lose sight of the influence and the exercise of this higher power of the reason.

"The gospel doth not destroy reason and rational proceedings. It is agreeable to common reason that old principles should be exploded, and appear unworthy, base, unreasonable, weak, before new ones be entertained. The working of the Spirit is according to the nature of man, moves not in contradiction to it, but in an elevation of reason ; he explodes principles which were planted in the mind before, and discovers principles which reason cannot disown, though it did not before apprehend ; he doth not extinguish reason, the candle of the Lord, but snuffs it and adds more light, reduces it to its proper manner of operation, and sets it in its right state toward God ; brings fresh light into the understanding and new motions into the will. He doth not dethrone reason and judgment, but applies it to its proper work, repairs it, sets it in its true motion ; as mending a watch is not to destroy it, but rectify that which is out of order, and restore it to



its true end. Religion is not the destruction but the restoration of reason. The arguments the Spirit useth are suited to the reason of men, otherwise conscience could not be moved, for conscience follows judgment ; it is not one act of judgment, but imagination, that reason doth not precede. As the service God requires is a rational service, so the method he uses in conversion is a rational method.”<sup>1</sup>

We would now say a few words upon some of the uses of reasoning to the preacher, regarding reasoning here in the ordinary sense of the term, as the method of persuasion by proof, or argument. Of these uses in cultivating the reasoning faculties, the first we would mention is—

**Uses of  
reasoning  
to the  
preacher.**

(I.) To give a knowledge of the powers and necessary laws of the mind in thought. Pure logic shows the laws both of immediate knowledge and of mediate knowledge, or thought. It teaches the methods of perception, or the outer order of things repeated to the mind ; and of thought, or the inner order of things as it exists in the mind by intuition, notion, judgment, inference, and system. Without some training in the art of thinking, one could hardly presume to be a public teacher or speaker. The preacher should know how to think. He should know what thought is, as far as it can be known, both in its origin in the cognitive faculties of intuition, perception, imagination, and in its evolution through the elaborative or discursive faculties. He should have some clear idea of the formation of distinct judgments out of the region of consciousness. Then, having gained the materials of thought, he should know

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<sup>1</sup> Charnock.

how to build upon them, by following out the laws of logical method, and step by step, through new identifications and comparisons of relations, he should arrive at higher and wider results. He should understand the laws of reasoning, by which, whether through the briefer method of inference or the more complex one of syllogistic reasoning, certain products are reached. A syllogism is the regular logical form of any argument, consisting of three propositions, of which the first two are called the premises, and the last the conclusion. The conclusion necessarily follows from the premises. But it is a mere form of reasoning, very liable to prove sophistical, or to prove nothing, because the terms are really identical. But if the premises are not true, and the syllogism is regular, the reasoning itself is valid, and the conclusion, whether true or false, is regularly derived. This dialectic skill, therefore, may be cultivated. Thought, while free, yet has its laws, which are as invariable as the laws of the physical world. It is by walking in the narrow way that, intellectually speaking, we come into the kingdom of truth. A man may have transient perceptions of truth, and brilliant, though vague, intuitions ; but he can make little sure progress in the investigation and discovery of truth, unless he is able from one clear judgment of the mind, or two distinct judgments, to evolve, by a movement of thought, a new though commonly related judgment ; and this is the simple process of deductive reasoning. We will not enter here deeper into the subject ; but, as preachers and reasoners, we should acquaint ourselves with the names and processes of the science of reasoning, for its very names and forms are intimately connected with its processes. We thus gain a clearer idea of the great laws of thought, and through thought we verify and build up truth. Using it as an in-

strument, we go forth into the fields of the physical and spiritual world, and construct systems out of the materials they furnish. In this way alone we can intelligently teach truth; and the preacher is, above all, a teacher. We would add, under this head, a word as to the two simple and fundamental principles of all thinking, and into which all true reasoning resolves itself, namely, analysis and synthesis. (*a.*) Analysis. This process is

**Analysis.**

that of a whole to a part. It reduces a truth to its elements, proving separately its different terms and conclusions, and examining its groundwork and foundations. This is always an intensely interesting process to the human mind, and to the common mind. There will always be eager listeners to a preacher who takes a truth, even so repulsive a truth as that of human sinfulness, and analyzes it with power and skill, and who thus gradually leads the mind from the outward to the inward truth, from the abstract statement to the concrete substance, *e.g.*, from the nature of sin itself to the nature of the human act of sin and all that it involves and bears along with it. A preacher who has not disciplined his mind to this analyzing process is always liable to be tripped up by some strong-minded reasoner in his congregation. His proposition is declared to be an apparent, and not true, conclusion from his premises, or his argument totally fails to touch this or that objection which reaches down deeper still. But the analytic method has its dangers; and reasoners carried away by their critical enthusiasm, are apt to make too much of the capabilities of analysis, and to forget that it is really a process of dissection, in which often the living unity escapes. Great errors in metaphysics and theology have originated from an extravagant use of the analytic process. In this way one may soon reason himself out of the sphere of living truth, and come into the region

of barren speculation and of atheistic materialism, as the strong tendency is now in some of the physical sciences, especially in the search after the principle of the origin of life. Truth in its primitive conditions is a whole or unit, and the moment you separate them without regard to this organic unity, you begin to lose the highest conception of truth. For these reasons we should not neglect the second great principle. (*b.*) Synthesis. This has

**Synthesis.** primary regard to the totality of truth ; and it aims at the combination of parts in one whole. As a reasoning process it is that from a part to a whole. It divides off, or draws off, separately, that point of agreement in several objects which we can designate by some common term. Thus, gradually, some general fact, or general principle, which belongs in common to all these objects, or classes of objects, may be separated, and higher and higher levels of truth, more and more nearly approaching the nature of pure laws, may be arrived at. This is a great power in a preacher, and lifts him at once above the level of those men who can never rise out of a circle of conventional ideas, nor venture upon new and independent views of truth ; whose stock in trade consists entirely of the conclusions of other minds. The moving power of reasoning depends mainly upon this power of generalization, of rising from one conclusion to another, and bearing along the mind of the hearer in a living and commanding process of argumentation, in which truth is made to develop its grander forces and its wider circles of thought and proof. Nothing is more useful than this power of generalization to a preacher who derives his themes of instruction from the Word of God ; who must, for the purposes of instruction, or in order to give unity to his instruction, seek to derive out of various members and parts



of a passage, one truth, one main lesson, one clear proposition, which he is to illustrate and enforce.

(2.) To develop truth in an orderly manner. Truth is orderly. Being the child of the supreme reason, truth must have an essential order, and certain unalterable proportions, which, if destroyed or disarranged, cease to have power. The gospel is a system of truth going out from a living centre, governed by one law of development, and wonderful in its adaptation to the human mind. It is bringing the infinite into the bounds of the finite. In order, therefore, that it may have its full influence and transforming power upon the mind, it should be made to stand before the mind in something of its original symmetry. The basis of all true preaching, or sermonizing, is this deeply-meditated and orderly development of Christian truth. The subject-matter of edifying and instructive preaching is the thorough discussion of those great principles of truth in their real harmony of proportions, which, taken together, form the body of Christian doctrine. This kind of thoughtful reasoning must constitute what has been called "the spinal column" of every true sermon. Other things are adjuncts; but here is the bone and substance of preaching. Compact, orderly discussion should occupy the main body of almost every discourse from the pulpit. "It is order," Vinet says, "which constitutes discourse. The difference between a common orator and an eloquent man is often nothing but a difference in respect of disposition." This "*lucidus ordo*," this true method in discourse, is essential to the teacher of truth. Method aids us to arrive at the end at which we aim, by applying the principles of the true development of thought to the investigation and confirmation of truth. The materials of truth, derived from the higher intuitions of reason, the

phenomena of consciousness, the observations of the senses, and the evidence of testimony, especially that of the Scriptures, are organized, verified, and established, through the laws of methodical reasoning. Thus we do not compose vaguely, which is composing without thought. We do not snatch up slight impressions or suggestions, and discuss them without grasp or depth ; but by the application of true principles of definition, division, and reasoning, we verify our knowledge of the Scriptures, arrange and dispose it in a clear method ; and we are thus able to teach it ; for “ one does not really know a truth until he can teach it.”

As highly as the study of logic has been lauded, perhaps, after all, its greatest value, or its true value, is to teach method in discourse. To the preacher it is useful as aiding him in his plan ; “ when,” in the words of Hooker, “ all that goes before prepares the way for all that follows, and all that follows confirms all that went before.” It promotes movement in a sermon, and keeps the end in view, eliminating all that is not subservient to that end.

While divine truth does not depend upon any process of reasoning but upon direct revelation, and upon the teaching of God’s spirit in the heart, yet by the tests and criteria of inductive reasoning, hypothesis, analogy, and the last analyses and relations of truth, its harmonies are brought out, its groundwork is laid bare, and it is presented to the mind in such a way that the reason bows and the conscience is convicted. Great preachers have been great reasoners ; not, perhaps, all of them, in the scientific methods of strict logic, but in the clear development of the foundation principles of doctrine, and in that method of persuasion which the heart teaches to the true preacher. Jonathan Edwards reasoned so forcibly that

his hearers thought God was speaking to them through him, as, indeed, he was ; for he grasped fundamental principles, and so entered into them, that while he himself was hidden, he shook the consciences of men by the pure power of truth. A greater than Edwards, or than Calvin, among human preachers was the apostle Paul, who was, above all, a reasoner. "He reasoned (*διαλεγόμενον δὲ αὐτοῦ*) of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." He was, according to Longinus, who had himself drunk into the spirit of Demosthenes, a dialectician of the first order. He convinced the reason and carried the heart. He was not a dogmatic reasoner, or a mere logician and "*doctrinaire*," and his reasoning was more rhetorical than formal, but he appealed to received principles of reasoning, to arguments that had a universal applicability, and to eternal truths in the constitution of his hearers' minds. He did not ask them to believe anything which he did not show them to be right, and which, therefore, ought to be believed, and which he himself believed. How fundamental were the great themes of his preaching, reaching to those questions which enter into the nature of God and the divine origin of man—predestination and election, the corruption of human nature by sin, grace and the atonement, justification by faith and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, the building up of the soul in a holy life, and the spiritual kingdom of Christ ! This kind of doctrinal preaching, dealing with fundamental truths, ribbed and clamped with manly argument, and filled with the breathings of the Spirit, and the warm affections of the heart, is a kind of preaching which is powerful, and which lasts. Argument forms the basis of interest with the popular mind, and it is the staple method of dealing with and influencing mind. All kinds of highly exciting and merely

“sensational preaching,” soon wear out ; but plain, sensible, and comprehensive reasoning, without the pedantry of the logician, or the hardness of the metaphysician, always has power with the great mass of common-sense, intelligent hearers. A sermon which has nothing of this element of thoughtful argumentation in it rarely makes an enduring impression, because it does not reach the depths of the subject, or the depths of the mind. It ruffles the top waves ; it does not go down into the springs of thought or motive. A preacher should be able to treat of the fundamental nature of moral evidence, and to reason in a forcible manner upon the subject of moral truth as related to human responsibility. No amount of fine writing, dazzling declamation, or even pathetic appeal, can atone for the absence of sound reasoning in a sermon. It need not, and should not, be technically theological, nor be continued wearisomely ; but there can be little true eloquence without it. Truth, which is the converting agency, is not honored if it is not carefully developed, and if this thoughtful, orderly setting forth of truth do not form the basis of the sermon. This forms the positive element in preaching.

(3.) To lodge truth firmly in men’s minds. Reasoning is not mere philosophy, which is the manifestation of the essential nature of things. But true reasoning is rather the manifestation or exhibition of truth for the purpose of immediate persuasion and practical good. A true preacher’s reasoning aims to lodge truth in men’s minds. Even logic, truly defined, is the science of methodizing and of directing the intellectual powers in the investigation of truth, and its communication to other minds. The last is as important as the first ; it is the essential thing in true reasoning. While the preacher, then, may philosophize in reasoning, he cannot remain in philoso-



phy, but must bring the truth out into the sphere of human responsibility. He should not be satisfied with merely demonstrating truth, but he should seek, as far as human powers can do this, to apply it to the human mind according to the laws of the mind ; for if these laws be observed in reasoning, the truth must be accepted, at least intellectually, and this is a great thing gained. The principles of reasoning are the same in all minds. The process of producing conviction is the same, though there are immense differences in reasoning power. There is but one way by which the mind is convinced of the truth, and becomes subjected to it. And divine truth itself is not to be taken out of this category, though influences of a supernatural nature are superadded, for the purpose of awakening the dormant or dead energies of the mind. The Holy Spirit is not given because we have not all the rational power needed to be convinced by the truth, but it is added because we will not, and, morally speaking, cannot, without the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, use the power and receive the truth. We should do *our* best to convince men of the truth, and leave it to a higher power to bring their minds into a condition in which the truth will find firm lodgment in them, and work its work upon them ; and the true reasoner will stand the best chance to do this. We may say that the burden of proof lies with the enemies of truth ; nevertheless, the preacher cannot expect to reach men's minds, and permanently convince them, unless he sets truth before them in a clear manner.

(4.) To expose and overcome error. Error is perverted or wrongly reasoned truth—truth out of its right relations. It is built on some process of false reasoning, and, having the appearance of truth, it has more power to deceive. It may arise from a fault in the form of thinking,

and thus be self-deceiving—the most subtly powerful of all error. It may arise from carelessness of observation, or untrue induction and deduction. Thus the statements from which a conclusion is drawn may even be true, but the deduction itself may be full of error. This false reasoning, however, may be sometimes far too deep for the ordinary mind to detect. The Christian heart may detect it, but it cannot be thoroughly overthrown until its fallacy is discovered and exposed. This can be done only by the disciplined reasoner. Gibbon, Hume, Strauss, have rarely met their match as acute dialecticians; therefore their reasoning has continued to work mischief. Zealous but unskillful men have attacked them, and been foiled, and the public faith has been weakened. It would seem to be proved that the fierce discussions upon Hume's famous argument on "miracles" might have been saved if some contemporary theologian had been able to point out in a clear way, which admitted of no gainsaying, the fallacy contained in Hume's argument—that its middle term refers really to but a part, whereas his conclusion is made to refer to a whole—an instance of what is called in logic "illicit process." In other words, Hume falsely makes some testimony, which is weak and fallible, to stand for all testimony, which is not thus weak and fallible. The preacher should be boldly skillful to detect these fallacies of false reasoning. Many errors of the head, and many errors which arise from ignorance and prejudice, and many errors which arise from false popular inductions, might be put aside forever in a congregation, if the preacher understood the nature of true and false reasoning. Admit the Romish premises, and you must come to the Romish conclusion; admit the rationalistic premises, and you can land yourself in the depths of pantheism, and even atheism.

When an error arises in a community, men honor a courageous assault made upon it by fair argument, rather than an attempt to put it down in a dogmatic, unreasoning way ; it will thrive under this latter treatment. A preacher of Christ has, at some time, to buckle on the armor of controversy, and meet error in manful conflict. He must sometimes fight it out, as Paul tells Timothy to do in respect to the false teachers of Ephesus ; and by the clear “ manifestation of the truth,” he will commend himself and his cause to all.

(5.) To enable him to employ the fit argument. We need not say that all arguments should not be used at all times. Before some audiences it would be better to employ the indirect argument than an argument where the conclusion is apparent. Dr. Emmons was famous for his “ *ratio obliqua*,” which oftentimes was brought to bear with sudden and irresistible power. He is, however, not to be followed too closely in that, for that art, if commonly used, would seem to imply something like craft. In proving a certain proposition, or form of truth, the *à priori* argument, or the method of deductive reasoning from generals to particulars, where certain generic truths are taken for the premises, and then we reason to individuals or particulars contained under them, may be the most forcible method. Reasoning upon the nature of God admits of the highest and most constant use of this kind of argument. Indeed, the preacher is called upon to use this argument almost continually, from the fact that he preaches to interpret and enforce divine revelation, instead of being called upon, as the scientific man is, to arrive at new truth by the system of inductive reasoning.

The *à priori*  
argument.

Sometimes it is best to reason from an announced con-

clusion, where demonstrative truth is impossible. This tentative process, when conducted on true principles, and not carried into the extremes of theoretical reasoning, is often interesting and awakening; it leads to original investigations and fresh views of divine truth. Oftentimes, on the other hand, without naming our proposition, it is the most effective plan to reason downward toward an unannounced conclusion, arriving at it as if led by the very force of truth, and not from any prearranged and controlling proposition.

A strong argument is made by reasoning from the principle of expansion or extension; as, for example, that of

**Expansion.** Young, in his "Christ in History." He argues from the admitted facts of our Lord's

life on earth, taking the most natural and lowest view of them—facts which present to men the simple manhood of Jesus; from these his argument rises and leads on to the irresistible conclusion that such words, such works, such facts, such a character, can be predicated only of a divine being, of one who in the constitution of his nature was one with God. The argument from con-

**Contraries.** traries is sometimes the only efficient argument; for the truth of some propositions can be established only by proving their opposites to be untrue; for of two opposites, both cannot be true, and if one be false, the other must be true. The argument from analogy is

**Analogy.** particularly useful to the preacher, but is, nevertheless, extremely difficult to handle with effect; and one may easily overdo it, and injure his cause. A false analogy is very seductive and very injurious. Because, it is sometimes said, a cultivated garden always brings forth good fruits, therefore a cultivated mind always produces good fruits and education is thus



the universal panacea of all evils—certainly a false conclusion. Analogy is often a strong argument, but it is not, and cannot be, a wholly demonstrative argument ; even Bishop Butler's argument is not claimed to be conclusive. It may be as strong in its moral impression as a demonstrative argument, and even stronger ; but it is, after all, greater in its negative than in its positive force. It is said to have raised more doubts in the mind of William Pitt than it solved. Employed in the more common methods of comparison, and of illustrative reasoning, the argument of analogy is of exceeding value to the preacher in imparting a living force to his preaching ; and that kind of reasoning makes the natural world an organ to play upon, and from it may be drawn harmonies and accords the most unexpected, powerful, and delightful.

“ The argument from analogy may be sound, but it is not to all minds the most conclusive.”

It should be remembered that the argument from analogy, unless it is supported by a true process of induction, or unless there is some real and substantial reason for the similarity of relations supposed in the analogy, becomes a mere illustration, having a rhetorical, but no logical value. To some kinds of mind nothing is more tempting and nothing often more deluding than the analogical style of reasoning. It is what Sir William Hamilton calls the principle of “ Philosophical Presumption,” by which we extend our inferences beyond the limits of experience ; and though a process dictated by the noblest intelligence yet it has its great temptations to error. By induction we reason on the principle of regarding the one in the many—the one thing in common in the many ; by analogy we reason on the principle of regarding the many in the one—or the many things in common in the one ; so “ analogy rests upon the principle

that things which have many observed attributes in common have other not observed attributes in common likewise." It is, after all, a pure presumption, though there may be very good grounds for it. "To judge analogically is to judge things by the similarity of their relations." For example, the theologian whose views we may be discussing, agrees in many points of doctrine with the Calvinistic system of theology, therefore, though we do not know the fact, it is right, we say, to presume that he is a thorough Calvinist. This, you see, though perfectly legitimate and highly interesting, is still not absolutely conclusive or demonstrative reasoning. Sir William Hamilton, however, ascribes to it a measure of certainty under some conditions, but he says, nevertheless, "Analogy can only pretend, at best, to a high degree of probability; it may have a high degree of certainty, but it never reaches to necessity." And as to that the same may be said of the inductive method.

The arguments, too, from relation, omission, experience, testimony, probability, may be wielded with effect, if they are employed at the right time and in the right place. What is required in an argument is simply to present the truth in as strong and clear a light as one can, so as to give all possible satisfaction to every mind in the audience. We are required, therefore, to study the particular case before us, the nature of the truth to be established, the end to be gained, the quality of the audience, and to adapt the reasoning to the circumstances of the theme and occasion, so that we may be "workmen that need not to be ashamed."

(6.) To produce persuasion. We mean by this something over and above what has been said of developing truth and lodging it in the mind. We mean effecting

a change in the mind and act of the hearer. We mean not merely to convince, not merely to move, but to move to act. Paul and the early preachers did not leave men quaking under the law, but led them to Christ; the law itself was made to conduct men to Christ. This was old Latimer's way of preaching. He was earnest, as he said in his own quaint words, "in casting down the people with the law, and with the threatenings of God for sin; not forgetting to ridge them up again with the gospel and the promises of God's favor."

Persuasion, according to Whately, depends on the conviction of the understanding, the influencing of the will, and the moving of the feelings. Now, it is evident that no exhortation, nor brilliant writing, can do this, without, first of all, some clear exhibition of truth, which appeals to the reason, presents a motive to the will, and acts as an impulse to the feelings. Feeling does not move at the mere voice of command. It is jealous of authority—it refuses to be tampered with. The road to it is indirect, and often exceedingly circuitous. The persuasion which finally seizes upon and moves the whole being is no immediate result. When the Athenians started up and cried, "To arms!" it was after one of Demosthenes' most exhaustive and labored efforts of reasoning. The depths of the nature must be slowly aroused and heated, before the whole soul—so to speak—flows forth under persuasion. The understanding must hand its verdict to the will, and the will must communicate its impulse to the affections, and then the whole awakened mind yields itself freely to the truth, and says, "I believe, and I will do." As has been said in regard to divine truth, the substantial and peculiar nature of divine truth should not be lost sight of—that it is in itself pure and simple, the converting instrumentality; or rather that it

is accompanied by the special demonstrating and renewing power of the Holy Spirit. We can add nothing to the truth. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." All is dry light without God's living energy—that inner persuasion of truth which imparts new life to the nature.

We add two cautions to the preacher in the use of reasoning. (a.) He should not rely wholly upon it for success. Let one carefully study the apostolic

**Cautions in  
the use of  
reasoning.**

theory of preaching, as laid down in 1 Cor. 1 : 17, to the 2 : 5, where the futility of human wisdom in turning the sinful heart to God is demonstrated. We see ourselves how absolute errors, fatal errors, in regard to life and doctrine, sometimes spring from false reasoning, perverted judgment, imperfect and partial induction, the fallacious but attractive syllogism, the ambiguous method, the inverted proof, the passionate or dogmatic conclusion, the rareness of clear definition, the innumerable causes and influences that go to disturb and destroy the honest processes of the mind even of the man of best intentions; and these things forbid us to trust too much to reasoning. The nature of the corrupted human heart and the nature of divine truth—in a word, the presence of sin and the need of a higher power—forbid a supreme reliance on human reason. The preacher of Christ is indeed the agent of producing not only persuasion, but life; he is not only, by means of the truth, to bring men into a new opinion, but into a new disposition; but he must have God's help for this. Yet the truth is, nevertheless, the instrument of this great work. A popular American preacher has said that "ministers should not always be talking about the truth—the truth. They should preach and think more of the life." We



agree with the sentiment that was probably meant to be conveyed by that remark, yet there is a latent fallacy in it ; for divine truth differs from common truth, inasmuch as it is itself potential with life : “ My words, they are spirit and they are life.” They are not the mere food of the intellect, they nourish the soul into everlasting life. We know of no way of producing new spiritual life excepting through the bringing home of divine truth to men’s minds and hearts, and, through their honest reception of it into the currents of life. This further inward assimilating and life-giving process of the truth is hidden and mysterious to us ; yes, more so than the processes of our natural life ; but our duty as preachers is plain : we should present and enforce the truth in the clearest, most powerful and most persuasive manner that we are capable of. “ Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

That is invariably the divine method ; and it is beautifully consonant to the laws of the mind. We come to the conclusion that reasoning, while it has a real value to the preacher, is insufficient for the highest practical results ; these depend upon other factors. God, and the things of God, in their deepest and truest meanings, do not lie in the domain of reasoning ; they are to be reached, if at all, through faith, feeling, obedience, love—often by not seeking to prove or define them. The preacher should, therefore, beware of dogmatizing upon themes of a higher sphere, and should keep himself to the simple language of faith ; he should choose to be vague, rather than to attempt to confine infinite things in logical formulas. These logical forms are useful but they are not creative or productive. It has been said of the syllogism itself that it is, even the best, but a *petitio principii*. One may, indeed, sin as much through argu-

mentative preaching, as through sensational preaching. The preacher should speak on heavenly themes even as a child rather than as a geometrician. His reasoning, should it ever assume an entirely abstract form, separates himself and his theme from the living sympathies of his hearers. Preaching must reach the people, or it is vain, dead, worse than dead. (*b.*) He should not be a mere reasoner. Reasoning is by no means all that a sermon needs. It should have literary attractiveness, spiritual insight, and, above all, heart, love, life, faith, unction. Some kinds of sermons do not even admit of much close reasoning. And reasoning in sermons should not end in demonstration, but should be aimed at the conscience, will, and heart. If the gospel is not preached in obedience to the rule of right, in reference to the moral sense of men, it will have no permanent effect. It must not coerce nor wheedle men ; but it must address their reasons in all honesty and fairness, otherwise the pulpit lays itself open to the charge of being called "coward's castle." And the method of reasoning should not be too circuitous or technical. Dr. Wayland, for example, had a logical mind, and used the logical method in preaching ; but his hearers thought little of the logic, because his sermons were practical, and were pointed directly to the heart and life. It is not always practicable, nor always best, to make the direct appeal ; but no sermon should be left to stand merely as an argument, exciting respect or applause, and carrying conviction to the head ; but the hearers should perceive that the preacher cares nothing about the argument, as an argument, and that he is preaching to bring them to God and eternal life. The preacher should not leave himself, or the merit of his work, in the mind of the hearer, but Christ and his work, Christ and his love. His hearers will get accus-

tomed to the most terrifying doctrines, if they see that the preacher, in his treatment of them, means nothing more than the display of his dialectic skill and partisan orthodoxy. This kind of preaching has been sometimes carried so far, that it has emptied churches and driven away the Spirit of God. Paul warned Timothy against this very thing, and bade him not dwell upon subjects "which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith;" and to preach, "not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord." The preacher and his sermon are of comparatively little importance. They have accomplished their task, if, by God's grace, they bring men to the feet of Jesus. Has a sermon an amazingly rendering power? Like a shell that has done its work, the most powerful sermon, the most faithful argument, after it has sped to its mark, is but worthless iron.

We would desire, in closing this theme, to repeat the warning against too high expectations concerning the productive power of the logical method in the investigation and communication of divine truth. Insight and simple consciousness, the exercise of the higher reason, above all, faith and obedience, are the chief productive elements in the discovery and inculcation of divine truth. In religious things the intuitions of the heart are better than the conclusions of the intellect. No man is converted by reasoning, but he is by love—the love of God as manifested in Christ.

#### SEC. 25. *Study of Language.*

Whatever may be our theory in regard to the origin of language, whether it be natural or divine, it is assuredly the divinely ordained and inevitable expression of that spirit in man which allies him to God. Man was created with the capacity and instinct of language; *i.e.*, with the

organs of speech and the ability to use these organs to express his thoughts; and the effort to do this, or the process of doing it, was the origin of language. What the actual process of forming language was, must remain an unexplained problem; but the two elements in the production of language were undoubtedly the power of thought and the power of articulate expression. Why certain sounds were applied to certain things, or objects, or ideas, we know not; but we know that there must have been, before sound, the power of perception, of observation, of classification; and thus thought was, humanly speaking, the originating cause of language. Language is thought embodied in speech. Words are the signs and instruments of thought. And what is thought but the operation or action of the mind itself, in its endeavor to communicate its ideas or to define and express its conceptions? Thus language, as the expression of thought, which is the essential result and accompaniment of mind, is really the true manifestation of the human mind. Language is the great distinction of humanity, as being the way in which the mind, or the spirit, in man, makes itself known. "To speak is a necessity of man's rational and emotional nature; he speaks because he thinks and feels." As the word without the spirit is dead, so, perhaps, it may be said that the spirit without the word is dead also. Let us come at the root of language, and we find that it is spiritual; and this truth increases inexpressibly its value and power to us as preachers. It is true that language is not a perfect expression of the spirit—how could it be? "For any definition we can frame for the eye as the organ of sight, the statement that 'God sees,' is untrue, and we are only enabled to decide this by the grasp we possess of the idea enveloped



in the words, 'He that made the eye shall he not see?' Thus language, with all its power of abstraction, is but concrete when compared with thought; and it is, perhaps, the privilege of advancing holiness, to be able to divest its thoughts more and more of the accretions, which are not wholly separable from them when clothed in human language."<sup>1</sup> Although language is thus, after all, an imperfect exhibition of the soul, or thought of the soul, yet it is the most perfect of all modes of spiritual expression. It is more perfect than music, painting, sculpture, or any of the expressive arts. These are, in some sort, language, and very expressive language; but the language which is contained in words fits the soul more closely, and is more subtle and vital than they. The "winged words" fly forth as on the breath of the soul. Other modes of expression are more material, indefinite, and obscure. Speech is thus, more than anything else, the soul made visible. Ben Jonson says, "Language must show a man; speak, that I may see thee! It springs out of the most retired and inmost parts of us, and is the image of the parent of it, the mind. No glass renders a man's form and likeness so true as his speech." Walter Savage Landor says, "Language is a part of a man's character." In fact, no two persons speak the same language, nor give precisely the same meaning to words. Every man's speech is, to a certain degree, peculiar and individual, being the image of his own soul, and of no one's else. He may try, perhaps, to hide his spirit in his language, but it will, if he speaks much, show itself. If language has this spiritual source and power, it deserves the greatest attention, for profound forces are wrapped up in it, deep influences for evil or for good.

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<sup>1</sup> "Christian Remembrancer," April, 1860, p. 310.

We may see at a glance that if there is this profound spiritual source of language, the spring should be kept pure for the sake of the language, which is its true result and manifestation. Professor Whitney, in opposition to Max Müller and some of the German writers, regards language as a moral instead of a physical science ; and he looks upon it as connected more with the spiritual will than with the physical life. Without doubt, because it is thus so deeply associated with moral responsibility, and so nearly allied to the soul itself, the Saviour said, " For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Also the apostle James said, " If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."

The following is a characteristic and eloquent passage on the " Power of the Tongue," by Isaac Barrow :  
" From hence, that the use of speech is itself a great ingredient into our practice, and hath a very general influence upon whatever we do, may be inferred that whosoever governeth it well cannot also but well order his whole life. The extent of speech must needs be vast, since it is nearly commensurate to thought itself, which it ever closely traceth, widely ranging through all the immense variety of objects ; so that men almost as often speak incogitantly, as they think silently. Speech is indeed the rudder that steereth human affairs ; the spring that setteth the wheels of action on-going ; the hands work, the feet walk, all the members and all the senses act by its direction and impulse ; yea, most thoughts are begotten, and most affections stirred up thereby ; it is itself most of our employment, and what we do beside it is, however, guided and moved by it. It is the profession and trade of many, it is the practice of all men, to be in a manner continually talking. The chief and most con-

siderable sort of men manage all their concernments merely by words ; by them princes rule their subjects, generals command their armies, senators deliberate and debate about great matters of state ; by them advocates plead causes, and judges decide them ; divines perform their offices, and minister their instructions ; merchants stock up their bargains, and drive on all their traffic. Whatever, almost, great or small, is done in the court or in the hall, in the church or at the exchange, in the school or in the shop, it is the tongue alone that doth it ; 'tis the force of this little machine that turneth all the human world about. It is indeed the use of this strange organ which rendereth human life beyond the simple life of other creatures, so exceedingly various and compounded ; which creates such a multiplicity of business and which transacts it ; while by it we communicate our secret conceptions, transfusing them into others ; while therewith we instruct and advise one another ; while we consult about what is to be done, contest about right, dispute about truth ; while the whole business of conversation, of commerce, of government, and administration of justice, of learning, and of religion, is managed thereby ; yea, while it stoppeth the gaps of time, and filleth up the wide intervals of business, our recreations and divertisements (the which do constitute a great portion of our life) mainly consisting therein ; so that, in comparison thereof, the execution of what we determine and all other actions do take up small room ; and even all that usually dependeth upon foregoing speech, which persuadeth or counsel-eth, or commandeth it. Whence the province of speech being so very large, it being so universally concerned, either immediately as the matter, or by consequence as the source of our actions, he that constantly governeth it well, may justly be esteemed to live very excellently."

We would, therefore, lay down the simple proposition, that for every conceivable reason, whether spiritual or practical, the study of language is essential

**The study of language essential to the preacher—**

(1.) That language may become the perfect instrument of thought. If language is thus vitally related to spirit, and, therefore, to thought, it becomes the preacher—whose duty it is to communicate the highest and most spiritual thought to others—to study the powers and adaptations of language. These are hidden and evasive. There is a law of life in language, which is exceedingly subtle, and which cannot be grasped by the unstudious or mechanical mind. This is the acquisition of a profoundly disciplined perception. While the philological uses of a preacher's special study of language, for the independent interpretation of the Scriptures, and for all scholarly purposes, are apparent, it is not of this aspect of language that we would now particularly speak. The preacher should study language—language itself, not languages—in order that it may become this spiritual manifestation or power ; or, in other words, that it may become a facile and perfect instrument of thought. Such is the divine use of language. The Word of God is the perfect instrument of the Spirit of God—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." And this higher truth respecting the word, or speech of God, extends even to him who is the preacher of that word ; for he who preaches the word of God purely, wields "the sword of the Spirit." There is a spiritual influence, a pure power, that moves the soul and accompanies the language which springs from a mind striving to express divine truth in a way that shall honor it and worthily present it. And if the human preacher, proclaiming the truth purely, is thus



permitted to wield the sword of the Spirit, how much more should his language become the sword of his own spirit ! The word should be born with the thought. Language should be the perfect instrument of the preacher's own mind, doing with equal facility the mightiest and most delicate acts of his will. Even as his thought is, even as his inmost soul is, so should his language be. The spiritual force of the man should go forth without apparent effort, or incongruity of his words. Men should not think of his language, how beautiful or how strong it is, but should see himself in his language, should see his spirit. To designate a modern writer and preacher, the language of Dr. Bushnell is, we think, in a marked degree, the manifestation of his thought ; he brought his language to a wonderful accord with his inward self. His style might not be considered perfect, but it expressed himself, and it expressed what he willed. His mind wielded speech as a strong, swift gymnast moves his limbs. Thought and word were one and indivisible—one act. He made language a study. He appreciated its power, and sought for its living law. Everything he said, therefore, had a meaning, and was instinct with life. His use of words is at the same time exact and carelessly copious. It is not confined to what is called neatness of style, but it has those higher qualities of power which require a wider and bolder sway over the realm of language. When he needs a strong word or phrase for his purpose, he digs it up like a rock out of the earth, and hurls it with all its ponderous weight. When, however, he wishes to express an abstract and philosophical idea, instead of simplifying it, and bringing it down to the level of the unphilosophical mind, he avails himself freely of learning and of accurate scientific terminology, knowing that there is an instinct

in the appreciation of language even among common men, which is better than education. In a word, he laid hold of anything in the kingdom of language which *served his thought*, which manifested most perfectly the force and sagacity of his spirit. Another instance among modern preachers of this plastic and vital use of language, though not with the peculiar power of Dr. Bushnell in this one particular, is F. W. Robertson. It was said of a more ancient preacher still—Apollos—that he was “an eloquent man,” referring, doubtless, to this power of expression in language. The preacher’s use of language should have all the naturalness of a common man’s speech, and, at the same time, all the scholar’s command of the higher and more hidden resources of language; its exquisite adaptations to human thought.

(2.) That he may have a mastery of words. The preacher’s use of language, we have said, should have all the naturalness of a common man’s speech, and, at the same time, all the scholar’s command of the wide resources of language. “A well-educated person in England seldom uses more than about three thousand or four thousand words in actual conversation. Accurate thinkers and close reasoners, who avoid vague and general expressions, and wait till they find the word that exactly fits their meaning, employ a larger stock; and eloquent speakers may rise to a command of ten thousand. Shakespeare, who displayed a greater variety of expression than probably any other writer in any language, produced all his plays with about fifteen thousand words. Milton’s prose works are built up with eight thousand; and the Old Testament says all that it has to say with five thousand six hundred and forty-two words.”<sup>1</sup> How

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<sup>1</sup> Max Müller’s “Science of Language,” p. 266.

shall the preacher obtain this sway over the wide field of language—how shall he acquire this copious vocabulary—unless he makes language a special study—language itself—the powers, resources, and wealth of words? This is a broad realm ; one must conquer it to use its revenues. He may have thought and learning, he may have a vivid conception of truth ; but unless he can express his thoughts, unless he can wield this instrument of the soul with freedom, he is a dumb prophet, he is an inarticulate soul, the word of God languishes imprisoned within him. One may deal too exclusively with the substance, and neglect too much the form of truth, or the harmonious development of the substance and the form. The language, therefore, of some preachers, when they begin to attempt to communicate thought to other minds, is stiff, mechanical, unyielding. They are not masters of expression. The living power of words is not theirs. Their ideas freeze while they speak. The inward conception finds a totally inadequate medium of representation. There is no vital union between the thought and the word ; so that the style has either the appearance of not being one's own, or of being that of an uncultivated mind ; which impression, in either case, may be entirely false. The young preacher should be warned of his deficiency in time, and he should set himself about correcting or supplying this great want in his education, or, it may be, this want in his original powers of expression, for language is a special gift ; and unless he does this, he can hardly become a natural or original speaker ; for if a man wishes to have freshness and originality of style, he must master language, he must make words subservient to his will ; else he will express them in a formal style which he has caught from others, he knows not how. He cannot be original unless he has a style of his own, as

well as thoughts of his own. A man's style of writing or speaking may not be a good one, though it be his own ; but it certainly is not a good one unless it *is* his own ; unless he has broken loose from the leading-strings of imitation, and has acquired a genuine, unconscious style of his own. He who has a style that is expressive of his own mind has a style which his own mind will look and work freely in, and he does not fight in Saul's armor.

(3.) That he may, above all, be a master of his mother tongue. How can one become possessor of a natural, copious, and flexible style, which is the genuine investiture of his thought, until he thoroughly understands the genius and structure of the language in which he thinks? As it is now satisfactorily proved that there can be no mixed language, though one language may contribute to another, how important that one should understand his own ! Yet it is a singular fact that most educated men study, all their lives, the dead languages, and neglect that language which is the only living one to them, and which must be learned in its own grammar, history, and literature. "The general and obvious distinction between the grammar of the English and the Continental tongues is, that whereas in the latter the relations of words are determined by their form, or by a traditional structure of period handed down from a more strictly inflectional phase of those languages, in English, on the other hand, those relations do not indicate, but are deduced from, the logical categories of the words which compose the period, and hence they must be demonstrated by a very different process from that which is appropriate for syntaxes depending on other principles. A truly philosophical system of English syntax cannot, then, be built up by means of the Latin scaffolding which has served for the construction of all the continental



theories of grammar, and with which alone the literary public is familiar, but must be conceived and executed on a wholly new and original plan."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the purest and most idiomatic English writers in point of style have been men of one speech. Shakespeare's "small Latin and less Greek" is a familiar fact; and in the same category may be reckoned Izaak Walton, Dean Swift (who neglected his regular academic studies, and applied himself mostly to the reading of poetry), John Bunyan, Goldsmith to a certain extent, and De Foe; and, in modern times, Dr. Franklin, Cobbett, Erskine, Daniel Webster, Hugh Miller. These men, with one or two exceptions, knew little of the classics, or of any language other than their own; and yet with what power they used their own! What vigorous English some of our American editors employ who have had but a brief common-school education! The strength that these men have, as writers and speakers, comes purely from the English tongue; and this shows that there is an original power in our language which does not depend upon foreign learning.

To apply this to preaching, how often do we observe in the preacher, and especially in the young preacher fresh from the schools, a diction which is inverted and scholastic. It is not the language of the people, the language of intelligent merchants, farmers, mothers, and sensible ordinary people. It is not also pure English, but it is in some sense a foreign tongue. Take the language of most of the earlier New England preachers, not excepting a great deal of the writing of Jonathan Edwards (though it appeared less in him, and that is one of his many claims to greatness), and what a barbarous and un-

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<sup>1</sup> Marsh's "*Eng. Lang. and Early Literature*," Lec. i. p. 22.

couth dialect it was, made up of strained, contorted sentences, and of Latin and theological terms which never were nor could be good English, such as "effectuate," "eventuate," "exprobatation," "vilipend," "gripulous"! Cotton Mather's works are a curious study (the fruits of the study of which are to be seen in the inimitable "Bigelow Papers") as an exhibition of the distance to which the English tongue could be conveyed bodily away from its own forms, and still remain nominally an English tongue—though we are not saying that there does not remain a great deal that is valuable and eloquent in the writings of the New England fathers, aside even from Jonathan Edwards, whose works have peculiar claims of their own. But this pedantic barbarism of dialect is not confined to New England or to ancient times, but we find it in the English, and especially the Scotch preachers of modern days—above all, in the greatest of them, in Dr. Chalmers, who deliberately coined Latin-English in such grotesque and monstrous words as "insatisfaction," "transcorporated," "ataxic," and in a sentence like this, which, however good metaphysical language, is too scholastic for a sermon: "Prayer is the afferent fibre, and sacrament the efferent fibre of the religious system."

The rapid progress of science, and the coining of new scientific terms into the language, which are generally taken from the Latin, increases this barbarizing tendency in modern English speech, and for which the pulpit has a fatal proclivity.

In order to acquire the thorough mastery of the English vocabulary and of pure English idioms, two sources of study are particularly valuable, viz., English literature and English philology.

(a.) English literature. Nothing helps to make us facile and ready writers more than a rich course of read-

ing in English literature. In this way we gain a copious style, and a quick perception of the marvelous powers of words. Preachers are often exceedingly deficient in this kind of literary culture, and that is one of the causes of their stiff and barren style. Their English reading has been confined exclusively to professional authors, to theological works whose style, perhaps, is in the highest degree rigid, and devoid of vital beauty. They do not enter the broad fields of English poetry, drama, history, humor, and fiction. A knowledge of English literature implies a universal range of authors, and excludes anything strictly technical or professional. It has relations to humanity generally, rather than to any particular department of it. And what language may compare with the English in this vital element, in this multiform character, in this wide scope of subjects that appeal to our common nature? It is not merely for the acquisition of new knowledge, but of mental self-culture, of spiritual enriching and invigoration, that ministers should make themselves widely acquainted with the treasures of English literature. "Mere philological or etymological learning cannot make up for this want of general literary cultivation and reading. Dictionary definitions, considered as a means of philological instruction, are as inferior to miscellaneous reading as a *hortus siccus* to a botanic garden. Words exert their living powers, and give utterance to sentiment and meaning, only in the organic combinations for which nature has adapted them, and not in the alphabetic single-file in which lexicographers post and drill them."<sup>1</sup> De Quincey says, "There is, first, the literature of knowledge, and, secondly, the literature of power. The func-

English  
literature.

<sup>1</sup> Marsh's "Eng. Lang. and Early Literature," p. 442.

tion of the first is to teach ; the function of the second is to move." Apply this remark to English literature, and what names of living power start up ! They show us that if we are to go to Greek and Latin, German and French, for our learning, we need not step out of the charmed circle of English literature for works that communicate power, that reach the springs of motive and action, that educate character ; for there is a spiritual depth and penetration of the heart in English literature that is not to be found elsewhere. In Carlyle's words, " It is planted in man's heart."

We should endeavor to read English literature upon some plan ; we should divide it into its great epochs, make ourselves acquainted with the representative authors of each epoch, and study the growth and changes of the language from its origin to the present time.

A language which is the living speech of 80,000,000 of the earth's inhabitants, and which promises to be more widely spread than any other tongue, deserves our special study. Every new age, it has been said, has something new in it—it takes up a new position. English literature really began with Chaucer, for we speak now, essentially, the language of Gower, Wyclif, and Chaucer ; but the English language became a universal language, a classical tongue, one for all men, with Shakespeare. At the Restoration and through the eighteenth century, though gaining in variety, ease, and pure idiomatic style, it lost the vigor of the great Elizabethan period ; but this last century, commencing with Cowper and Burns, has witnessed a reformation in English literature, and a return to nature and original sources of power. The latter half of the reign of Elizabeth, and the whole of the reign of James I.—from 1580 to 1625—a half century or so, up to the beginning of the civil war, witnessed the



flowering of English literature and of the English language, and here should the student find his choicest reading. Of this period Lord Jeffrey said : " In point of real force and originality of genius, neither the age of Pericles nor the age of Augustus, nor the times of Leo, or of Louis XIV. can come at all into comparison." Of prose writers, Lord Bacon is prince, and for the theologian, moralist, and preacher he is one of the richest of authors both in style and matter. It is well to take one such author as the representative of an age, and try to read him with thoroughness, with all the helps that contemporaneous history, biography, painting, architecture, military and civil records, science, philosophy and poetry can afford us, and from him as a centre to work our way slowly around, taking in the works of his contemporaries, and thus mastering or completing the literature of an epoch from some advantageous centre—a better plan this than to read in a regular course, which is wearisome to the most persevering. The best division of English literature which we have seen is that of Professor Masson, into three great epochs : I. From Chaucer to Dryden. II. From Dryden inclusive to the close of the eighteenth century. III. From the close of the eighteenth century to the present time. But it does not lie in our province to discuss at length English literature. While prose represents, as it were, the masculine element in literature, and is lord and keeper of the house, receiving poetry within it as a graceful guest or ornament of the house, yet the preacher should not neglect the great poets of his language—that part of literature which Shelley calls " the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds." Poetry is more essentially vital and spiritual than prose. Emerson says, " Poetry is the perpetual endeavor to express the spirit of the thing, to pass the

brute body and search the life and reason which causes it to exist—to see that the object is always flowing away, whilst the spirit or necessity which causes it subsists.” Religion allies itself with poetry as being the expression of what is purest and most ideal in mind, and he who has no appreciation of poetry loses much of the finer appreciation of Christ’s character, words, and works. There is a true as well as false sentiment, or sentimentalism. Wordsworth and Tennyson are next akin in high thought to the best divines in the language. The preacher, too, needs to cultivate his sympathetic nature, for he who has no power of sympathy is a theological cuttle-fish who darkens all about him with ink and nothing else. Poetry also aids the preacher to develop his imagination and his invention, both of which lie in the domain of representative literature. The reading of poetry, or good poetry, tends to supple the mind, to make it quick to see resemblances, and to express mental objects in vivid representations; to combine; fashion, and create fresh forms of truth.

In regard to English reading for the purpose of literary culture, putting aside strictly theological literature, and also metaphysical and scientific works, which will be read of course—there are certain books, partly religious and partly literary, that are peculiarly enriching, such as the works of some of the old English divines, especially Richard Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, Archbishop Leighton, Ralph Cudworth, adding, perhaps, Chillingworth and Stillingfleet. The writings of Lord Bacon have just that mingling of the philosophic and literary qualities which make their reading most nourishing intellectually. Bacon’s *Essays*, if nothing else, should be much in our hands. Coleridge’s prose writings, especially his “*Aids to Reflection*,” also combine rarely

the literary and philosophic characteristics. Of historical works Gibbon's "*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*" is a rich continent of learning transfused by the more personal literary element, sometimes, it is true, of the cynical and virulent sort, but perhaps on that account the more interesting in a psychological point of view. Such books as Grote's "*History of Greece*," Hallam's "*Middle Ages*," Robertson's "*Charles the Fifth*," Burnet's "*History of His Own Time*;" Clarendon's, Hume's, Macaulay's, Lingard's, Froude's, and Green's *Histories of England*, Freeman's, Motley's, Prescott's, and Bancroft's historical writings, there is hardly need to mention.

Of biographies Boswell's "*Life of Dr. Johnson*," Carlyle's "*Frederick the Great*," Lockhart's "*Life of Walter Scott*," Campbell's "*Lives of the Lord Chancellors*," Stanley's "*Life of Dr. Arnold*," "*Macaulay's Life and Letters*," and a score of others that might be noticed could not be omitted,

Of poetry, fiction, drama, and art—those works which form especially "*the literature of power*"—we cannot here enter into the vastly rich fields. We are not in favor of spending much time upon works which do not task the mind, and of unduly feeding the imagination; but he who neglects Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, Wordsworth, turns aside from that which feeds the divinest part of his nature. Walter Scott and Charles Kingsley, George Eliot and Thackeray, have also their claim. The modern novel has in some sense taken the place of the moral essay in the Queen Anne epoch, and even of the older English drama. It not only paints life and society, but analyzes action and character. There is little fear now that Carlyle will be copied in his style—indeed no one could imitate it successfully—but the reaction against

his aristocratic intellectualism and arrogant spleen will go by, and what is immortal in his scorn, and true in his sophism, and stimulating in his truth, will remain.

It would be an invaluable study, leaving a profound influence on the mind as a process of culture, deepening the power of thought and expression, for one to read Taine's "History of English Literature" (a remarkable book in spite of its materialistic philosophy and glaring faults, considering that it was the work of a foreigner and a Frenchman), and to take up the various English authors as he mentions them in their order of time, reading, under his direction and guidance, ample selections from their best works. This of course would be a process of years, but it would mingle pleasure and culture in a wonderful degree. Shakespeare alone would afford ceaseless study. The man pursuing this course would be a richer man, and the preacher a richer preacher. The humane and genial side of his nature would be developed; yet, as serious professional men, with a great object of life before us, our chief reading should be of a solid sort. There is a period of life which may be called the omnivorous period, when one should read pretty much everything; but after that, his reading must necessarily be more select and scientific. F. W. Robertson said, "I read hard or not at all—never skimming, never turning aside to many inviting books; and Plato, Aristotle, Butler, Thucydides, Jonathan Edwards, have passed like the iron atoms of the blood into my mental constitution." Yet our present point, be it remembered, is not theological and professional reading—but purely literary reading.

But in order to obtain a thorough knowledge and real mastery of the English language, it is necessary to give some serious attention (*b.*) to English philology. This is the study

English  
philology.



of the structural character of the language, its historical changes, and its practical analysis. To do this one must go to the very roots of the language, to the Anglo-Saxon, and observe the influence of the changes of form upon thought, and the introduction of new foreign elements that were grafted upon the old Germanic stock.

Perhaps no language is entirely pure, and the English language (comprehending, it is said, twenty-three idioms, ancient and modern) is the least so of all; yet, notwithstanding its composite character, it has sturdily maintained the essential character of its Gotho-Germanic parent stem. There we should go to study it, not merely in its distinctive Anglo-Saxon, but in its more continental Low German (Platt-Deutsch) sounds. "The English language is simply Low-Dutch, with a very small Welsh, and a very large Romance, infusion into its vocabulary. The Low-Dutch of the continent, so closely cognate with our own tongue, is the natural speech of the whole region from Flanders to Holstein, and it has been carried by conquest over a large region, original Slavonic, to the further east. But hemmed in by Romance, High-Dutch, and Danish, it is giving way at all points, and it is only in Holland that it survives as a literary language. It should always be borne in mind that our affinity in blood and language is in the first degree with the Low-Dutch, in the second degree with the Danish. With the High-Dutch, the German of modern literature, we have no direct connection at all."<sup>1</sup> Other foreign elements come in later, and especially the Latin or French element.

The French usurped the place of the English language for nearly three hundred years after the Norman conquest. There were great changes in the English language

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman's "Norman Conquest," v. i. p. 14.

between the middle of the twelfth century and the middle of the fourteenth. French became the court language, the language of law, the language of devotion and literature. There was a jargon of French and English spoken, corrupting the native tongue. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries this evil was at its height, but the tide began slowly to turn in favor of the original speech. "It was a sign that the English tongue was again looking up, when, early in the thirteenth century, a bishop wrote a devotional work in English for the use of a sisterhood of nuns. But, in so doing, he brought into his work a crowd of foreign words which had not shown themselves in English before, but which have stayed in our tongue ever since. The greater learning of the clergy, their greater intercourse with other parts of the world was, from one point of view, one of the better results of the conquest. But there can be no doubt that it led to a vast inroad of foreign words into our religious and devotional speech. Even the Lord's prayer and the Belief have not escaped; and that venerable relic of our ancient tongue, that old-world form—that *lex horrendi carminis*—in which English men and English women have been joined in wedlock for a thousand years, has not escaped the presence of a single stranger in the foreign word endow. Throughout the thirteenth century new foreign words were dropping in; in the fourteenth they came in with a rush. By the end of that century English had won its final victory; but the Parthian shafts of the defeated enemy had done the conqueror the deadliest of harm in the very moment of his conquest."<sup>1</sup> It has been said that our language has gained in variety and flexibility by the introduction of French and foreign

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman's "History of the Norman Conquest," vol. v. p. 545.

words into it, but this, according to Mr. Freeman, is very doubtful. "The foreign words which have poured, and are still pouring, into our language, are poor substitutes for the treasures of ancient speech which we have cast away." The power of the English tongue also, which it possessed so amply in the eleventh century, to make and combine new words, has been forever lost.

There are three great sources or treasuries of the English language in a philological as well as a literary point of view ; and especially of its idiomatic Anglo-Saxon element, which every one who wishes to have a pure and vigorous English style should endeavor to make himself familiar with—the works of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, and of the English Bible. We mention them together chiefly in respect of their language.

1. Chaucer. The study of Chaucer forms, perhaps, our best introduction to the study of the Saxon element in our language ; for, although great changes had already taken place in his day, yet Chau- **Chaucer.** cer is in one sense the creator of the English tongue ; he first moulded it into the forms of literature. Whatever remained of the Saxon after the Norman-French had been ingrafted upon it, and in some respects had fatally supplanted or outgrown it, he used with freedom and vigor. It forms still the staple of his language, and as his genius fixed the language in its forms of grammar and literature, the Saxon element did not, after him, yield to any extraneous influences. We may, indeed, set it down as an axiom capable of the fullest proof, that Chaucer's grammatical use of the language did not materially differ from its present use. Most of the essential grammatical changes from the ancient Saxon had already taken place ; although Dr. Johnson pronounced it impossible to ascertain precisely when our speech ceased to be Saxon, and

when it began to be genuine English. But the language of Chaucer is substantially our language ; and the true conservative influence, or the radically assimilating and unifying principle, in our tongue, now, as it was in his day, is its Saxon element : that is the substratum which it is impossible to disintegrate, and which has never given way to the influences of conquest ; it is therefore well worth our study. " Philosophy and science, and the arts of high civilization, find their utterance in the Latin words, or, if not in the Latin, in the Greek. One part of the language is not to be cultivated at the expense of the other ; the Saxon at the cost of the Latin, as little as the Latin at the cost of the Saxon." <sup>1</sup> But when a Latin and a Saxon word offered themselves for choice, Trench would have us take the Saxon. " But when we come to the words which indicate different states, emotions, passions, mental processes—all, in short, that expresses the moral or intellectual man—the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary is eminently affluent." <sup>2</sup> De Quincey says, " Pathos, in situations which are homely, or at all connected with domestic affections, naturally moves in Saxon words. And why ? Because the Saxon is the aboriginal element—the basis, not the superstructure ; consequently it comprehends all the ideas which are natural to the heart of man, and to the elementary situations of life." Whatever, then, we, as preachers, may draw from the Anglo-Saxon element of the language, we thereby gain in the vocabulary of the heart. One cannot move men to tears in the Johnsonian style ; and the preacher needs to learn this simple language of feeling.

2. Shakespeare. We cannot enter into the wide subject of the uses of the study of " the myriad-minded

<sup>1</sup> Trench's " English Past and Present," p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Marsh's " Eng. Lang. and Lit.," p. 94.



bard" to the preacher, as an aid in the knowledge of human nature, and as a guide to the depths of our moral being. Dr. Emmons, the in-  
Shakespeare.  
carnation of the logical intellect, read Shakespeare, he himself says, as a help in his preaching, and in the study of the human heart. The moral element lies at the basis of Shakespeare's greatness ; and it is this ethical and heart-searching quality, at the same time penetrating and genial, wonderfully discerning, yet healing and loving all, that makes him the poet of universal humanity. Even Goethe describes German, or in his classical works a sort of copied Greek nature, and Homer himself describes Greek—the Greek type of human nature, warlike, fierce, sensuous, eloquent, dissimulating, loving beauty, song, and art ; but Shakespeare's personages are men and women with the universal instincts of humanity, not English humanity merely, but that which might have lived, and loved, and suffered, and sinned, in any age or in any clime in which the race has existed, or shall exist. There was in the poet himself a mental completeness—of "imagination all compact ;" of intellectual depth and subtlety, as seen in the philosophic grasp of Hamlet ; of moral scope and apprehension, understanding intuitively the different states of human life, the masculine and the feminine natures, and the finest relations of the human will to the events and laws of the universe, so that "all humanity was mirrored in the individual." Shakespeare paints man and develops character, not as other artists, by working upon philosophical principles, upon theory merely, so that this person or that person is the embodiment of special character ; but he views man as a whole, with blendings of good and evil, wisdom and folly, strength and weakness ; swayed now by this motive and now by that ; capable of vast effort, but perishing before

the moth ; a creature of heaven and earth ; a being of passions, impulses, sympathies, attractions, as well as of rational judgments, and as diversified and unaccountable as the universe he lives in ; not exhausting any character, but letting him act fragmentarily, as he does in actual life, and as he does in the Bible, which book there is no doubt Shakespeare studied, and which is the only perfect transcript of man, because man's spirit is a great deep, and is supernatural and immortal. Ulrici, the German critic of Shakespeare, says that it is wonderful that a man who possessed such depths of passion and knowledge of sin, could have so controlled his life as to have been always, as he seems to have been, at least after his youthful period, respected and beloved. He says that his spirit, and his spiritual idea of God and man, was decidedly Protestant, contrary to the narrower judgment of Carlyle. Goethe says, " You would think, while reading his plays, that you stood before the enclosed awful books of fate, while the whirlwind of most impassioned life was howling through the leaves, and tossing them fiercely to and fro."

But the study of Shakespeare in his use of language, of the English tongue, in what has been called " his matchless use of words," is what we would now specially notice. We find that the Saxon was also the substratum of his style. He is said to have sixty per cent of native Saxon words, and the English Bible has about the same. Milton has less than thirty-three per cent. Shakespeare had, as before remarked, a comparatively restricted vocabulary, not exceeding, it is said, fifteen thousand words. His affluence of language, according to Marsh, arises from his variety of combination, rather than his numerical abundance of words ; he stood at the culmination of the strength and richness of the English tongue,

after Spenser and many skillful writers since Chaucer's day had moulded and refined it ; and yet it had not lost its simple English character. The naturalness, sweetness, expression, and force of Shakespeare's language sprang from this source. But he also understood how to use the resources of the classical words of the language, in order to give variety, elegance, and a lofty majesty to his thought. Shakespeare proved that the English language is the finest instrument of thought man ever had—capable of the most varied expression, whether it takes the form of precise thinking, or of the highest soarings of the imagination. There is a *spiritual* quality in the English which no other language possesses in an equal degree ; and this has always been its characteristic, for a language expresses the history and spirit of a race ; and in the English race, with all its grossness and earthliness, the moral and spiritual element has predominated. " It is in this inherited quality of moral revelation, which has been perpetuated and handed down from the tongue of the Gothic conquerors to its English first-born, that lies, in good part, the secret of Shakespeare's power of bodying forth so much of man's internal being, and clothing so many of his mysterious sympathies in living words." <sup>1</sup> We doubt whether so great a genius as Shakespeare, or even a greater, if we could conceive of such, could have written his dramas in the French language. And Shakespeare must have fully appreciated the moral richness and power of his mother tongue, to use it as he did ; for the opinion that prevailed so long, that he was simply a poet of nature, without art—born, not made—while in one sense true, in another is not true. He was a transcendent genius, but he shows

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<sup>1</sup> Marsh's " English Language," p. 94.

everywhere the artist ; though perhaps there never was an artist who wrought less on established rules. In fact he illustrates his own subtle words :

“ This is an art  
Which doth mend nature—change it, rather, but  
The art itself is nature.”<sup>1</sup>

What is the secret of the wonderful freshness of Shakespeare's language, so that it is always new, always wet with the morning dew, when the works of other great authors grow obsolete ? This is a question worthy of our special study. The language of the poet is so completely the expression of his mind that we think of the beauty of the thought, and are moved by the pathos and power of what is said, but we never think of the language itself, unless, indeed, we study it. This is the perfection of language ; this is to have the language one with the thought, the true expression of the spirit. In his language we look upon the real mind or spirit of Shakespeare, unconfused by the medium through which it is expressed. That, surely, is one of the great sources of his power. While thus a limpid expression of his thought, it by no means follows that all of Shakespeare's language has this achromatic character. It is sometimes obscure, dark, difficult to be understood ; but that springs from the depth of the thought, and not from the obscurity of the language. Here the language suits the thought, and is born with it.

Shakespeare's style, contrary to the prevailing canon of literary taste at the present day, is highly metaphorical. Oftentimes his most profound and exquisite thinking utters itself in this way ; and although it may be called

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<sup>1</sup> “ Winter's Tale,” iv. 3.



the language of poetry, yet it is a question whether the total disregard of the metaphorical style of thought—a style which springs from the closest relations of nature to the mind—is not a loss of vital power in style.

3. The English Bible. It is wonderful how the English translators of the Bible struck the golden mean between the Latin and the original Saxon.

“There was, indeed, something still deeper than love of sound and genuine English at work in our translators, whether they were conscious of it or not, which hindered them from sending the Scriptures to their fellow-countrymen dressed out in a semi-Latin garb. The Reformation, which they were in this translation so mightily strengthening and confirming, was just a throwing off, on the part of the Teutonic nations, of that everlasting pupilage in which Rome would have held them ; an assertion, at length, that they were come to full age, and that not through her, but directly through Christ, they would address themselves unto God. The use of the Latin language as the language of worship, as the language in which the Scriptures might alone be read, had been the great badge of servitude, even as the Latin habits of thought and feeling which it promoted had been the great helps to the continuance of this servitude through long ages. It lay deep in the very nature of their course that the reformers should develop the Saxon, or essentially national, element in the language.”<sup>1</sup>

The English  
Bible.

The King James version was completed and published in 1611. In the great religious controversies at and after that period, this version became the quoted authority, the standard of appeal ; and thus it planted itself deep

<sup>1</sup> “English, Past and Present,” p. 39.

in the mind and heart of the people, so that not only in a spiritual, but linguistic point of view, it has exerted a more shaping influence on our language than any other volume. If Chaucer was the harbinger, the English Bible was the finisher or perfecter, of the English language. It is not merely the colloquial language, nor merely the book language ; it is rather the popular religious language, or the choice phraseology of the best Christian minds of the nation. England had been Protestant for nearly a century when our English version was made, and Wyclif's, Tyndale's, Matthews', Coverdale's, and Cranmer's translations had been in the hands of the people, the first of them from the fourteenth century. Our version was not a new one, but was founded upon those previous translations, with but slight changes of expression, so that it marks the growth and perfection of the language during its whole formative period. It looks far back, as well as far forward ; it stretches over the entire history of the English language ; it embodies essentially the best speech of the English people during at least five centuries ; it is the most genuine English since the time when the English language became the real expression of English thought ; and it is a remarkable fact that the best usage of words at this moment is more nearly assimilated to the style of the English version of the Bible than it was a century or two centuries ago, showing that the English Bible exerts a constant attraction and conservative influence upon the language. In many points of correct scholarship and interpretation it is confessedly faulty, and it has undergone thorough and careful emendation in the " Revised version " of 1881, but we cannot get far away from it and still be English. No version of the Bible which has since been made can compare with it in nobility, sweetness, and spiritual force ; for a translation

should have something more than correctness in order to be true, since the very spirit escapes in a literal and inelegant version. It is, we think, not one of the least advantages of our profession, even in a rhetorical point of view, that we are driven to the constant reading and study of the English Bible. It should exert a strong influence upon our style ; ought we not to study it continually, even for that purpose ? Coleridge said, " Intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style." It will also enrich and invigorate, for there is just that mingling of prose and poetry in the Bible which marks the highest and richest character in style. " We should take this silent warning from the pages of revelation, and combine in our literary culture the same elements of the actual and the imaginative." <sup>1</sup>

In addition to what has been said of the literary and philological study of our language, we would remark that it should be studied as it is used among living men, we might add of living women also.

**The language  
of living  
men.**

This we have before urged. As preachers, we are called upon to leave the language of books, and to take up that of living men, purified of its debasements. We are to study the speech of intelligent men and women as we hear it every day by the hearth, in the streets, and by the way. " Grammaticasters seek the history of language in written, and especially in elegant, literature ; but, except in the fleeting dialect of pedants, linguistic change and progress begin in oral speech ; and it is long before the pen takes up and records the forms and words which have become established in the living tongue. If you would know the present tendency of English, go, as Luther did, to the market

<sup>1</sup> Reed's " Eng. Lit.," p. 75.

and the workshop ; you will there hear new words and combinations which orators and poets will adopt in a future generation.”<sup>1</sup> We are, if possible, to get hold of the *spoken* language. We should possess a medium of communication with the common heart. Augustine went so far, when preaching to the colonial inhabitants of Africa, as to speak their broken Latin to them. We should rid ourselves, as far as possible, of the language of scholars, while at the same time we retain the purifying and elevating influences of true scholarship. Old Roger Ascham’s rule was “to speak like a common man, and think like a wise man.” A preacher who cannot talk to the people so that they can understand him is stopped at the threshold of his ministry.

In conclusion, let the preacher first have the truth, and then know how to express it. Let him not neglect the last, while acquiring the first. Let him fill his soul with the truth and then seek to make it known to men. This can be done alone through language. Language makes the word “the preached word,” the living word, which is able to save men’s souls.

#### SEC. 26. *Taste in Preaching.*

Taste has been defined as “that faculty of the mind which enables it to perceive, with the aid of reason to judge of, and with the help of imagination to enjoy, whatever is beautiful or sublime in the works of nature and art.”<sup>2</sup> It aims to establish correct principles of knowledge and criticism in relation to the production of the beautiful in art. Carlyle says in his strong way : “Taste, if it mean anything but a paltry connoisseurship, must mean a general sus-

<sup>1</sup> Marsh’s “Eng. Lang. and Lit.,” p. 452.

<sup>2</sup> Quackenbos’s “Rhetoric,” p. 170.



ceptibility to truth and nobleness ; a sense to discern, and a heart to love and reverence, all beauty, order, goodness, wheresoever and in whatsoever forms and accomplishments they are to be seen. This surely implies, as its chief condition, not any given external rank or situation, but a finely gifted mind, purified into harmony with itself, into keenness and justice of vision, above all, kindled into love and generous admiration."

Preaching would be debased by calling it an æsthetical art ; yet æsthetical principles must more or less enter into it, so far as it may come under rhetorical rules ; and there is the more need of attending to these principles of good taste in preaching because of late years there has been a growing tendency to loose speech, and even vulgarity, in the pulpit.

Quatremère De Quincy, in his work on the Fine Arts, places poetry at the head of the æsthetic arts, as being the purest product of the mental idea of beauty, and the farthest removed from the material object : then comes music ; then painting ; then sculpture ; then architecture ; then come the mechanical and illustrative arts. We would, however, be disposed to give to oratory the first place so far as it is an æsthetic art, because it acts more immediately upon the soul ; because it is more free and spiritual than any other art ; and because it deals almost exclusively with pure ideas. Certainly, this is true of preaching. That oratory is an art there can be no doubt, for it is a system of means to an end, and of the most exquisite and intellectual kind ; but it is not wholly an art, for the useful and practical predominate in it far more than the beautiful ; and the beautiful itself, in oratory, is but relative, or what is fitted to increase the power and usefulness of oratory. It is, in fact, by the assistance which it renders, by the

power which it lends to the efficiency of the oratorical art in its great ends, that the idea of the beautiful can enter at all into oratory. Mr. Emerson says : " The conscious utterance of thought, by speech or action, to any end, is art. Architecture and eloquence are mixed arts, whose end is sometimes beauty and sometimes use. Eloquence, as far as it is a fine art, is modified by the material organization of the orator, the tone of the voice, the physical strength, the play of the eyes and the countenance. All this is so much deducted from the purely spiritual pleasure, and from the merit of art, as being rather the attribute of nature." <sup>1</sup>

The preacher surely should not aim at the beautiful, so far as to make it his end ; but the principles of good taste, of true harmony and fitness, should be in his mind, so that all its productions should unconsciously take the highest form of beauty. " Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report"—these noble and beautiful forms of things—he is called to think upon, and he dwells perpetually in their high communion and meditation. They are chiefly forms of mental and moral beauty with him. " All high ideas of beauty," says Ruskin, " depend probably on delicate perceptions of fitness, propriety, relation, which are purely intellectual." They are taken out of their sensible relations with the visible world, and become ideal forms or types of beauty in the mind, associated with sacred and eternal things, and with God himself.

While, then, the preacher does not, and should not, aim at the beautiful in art, he still may come through the beautiful into the good ; and he more and more will find,

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<sup>1</sup> " Society and Solitude."

as he enters into the higher things of God, that the *τὸ καλὸν* and the *τὸ ἀγαθόν* are one, that truth is beauty, and that a mighty power in preaching the gospel lies in its appeal to the universal æsthetic principle in the human heart. We would be willing to found this assertion upon no less an authority, though probably, to some, an unexpected one, than Jonathan Edwards, in the third chapter of his treatise on "The Nature of True Virtue."

Æsthetics, looked upon as an art, or as a department of mental science, chiefly applies, according to the Kantian use of the term, to the form of thought which any beautiful object of nature or art must necessarily, or as it exists in the mind, assume ; it does not refer primarily to the actual or material condition or form of the object to which it is applied. But real beauty resides ultimately in the idea ; first of all in the absolute idea of beauty itself, which has its type in the divine creative mind ; thence it enters into the conception of the human mind ; and from that conception a product of beauty is born, which is the outward expression of this formal idea. The question is, May this æsthetic idea of formal beauty enter into so solemn and practical a work as a sermon, or preaching? We think it may, because—

Why may  
the æsthetic  
idea enter  
into preach-  
ing.

(1.) Our affection for God is increased by the setting forth of his perfections and true loveliness. The philosophical object of love, even of the highest love, is beauty. A sermon about God has, for one of its aims, to bring out the beauty of the divine nature--the essential beauty of God—not in its relations to us, but as it is in itself, in its own ineffable loveliness, for our love and praise. But this may be considered a transcendental reason ; and, more practically, the idea of beauty may enter into a sermon, because—

(2.) Beauty renders truth more attractive. We cannot do better here than to quote a passage from one of Schiller's essays on the "Limits of Taste." "Certainly, beauty of investiture can promote intellectual convictions just as little as the elegant arrangement of a repast serves to satiate the guest, or the exterior polish of a man to decide his internal worth. But just as the fine disposition of a table entices the appetite, and a recommendatory exterior generally awakens and excites attention to the man, so by an attractive exhibition of truth we are favorably inclined to open our soul to it ; and the hinderances in our disposition which otherwise would have opposed the difficult prosecution of a long and rigorous chain of thought, are removed. The subject never gains by beauty of form, nor is the understanding assisted in its cognition by taste. The subject must recommend itself directly to the understanding through itself, while beauty of form addresses the imagination, and flatters it with a show of freedom."

The last expression of Schiller's shows one true use of the æsthetic principle as applied to oratory, and even to sacred oratory ; it appeals agreeably and powerfully to the imagination, and thus makes way for the more favorable hearing of the truth ; and even this advantage is not to be carelessly neglected by the preacher. "The greatest truths," says Channing, "are wronged if not linked with beauty, and they win their way most surely and deeply into the soul, when arranged in their natural and fit attire."

(3.) The æsthetical element has a place in the sermon because the Scriptures themselves admit of it. The Bible is full of the æsthetic element ; the preaching of the prophets was a lively address to the imagination, by the presentation of the boldest and most beautiful sym-



bolism ; the preaching of the apostle Paul abounds in appeals to this principle. What is finer than his figure of the Roman armor, carried out with such wonderful beauty and completeness of detail, and which at this day is exquisitely illustrated by the bas-reliefs of Trajan's Column at Rome ? The introduction to his discourse on the Areopagus is a splendid instance of the principle of adaptation, which is one of the qualities of beauty. Paul had a fine perception of the æsthetic quality of "propriety"—one that borders closely on "adaptation ;" he addressed the fit word to every audience ; he made use of Greek literature at Athens ; he reasoned from the Hebrew Scriptures and theology at Jerusalem, and in the Jewish synagogue ; he appealed to Roman law and opinions in addressing a Roman assembly.

But to come to an infinitely higher example—there is in the words and discourses of our Lord that sense of moral beauty, which, though it is not to be named with mere intellectual beauty, and least of all with beauty which is the object of perception by the senses, nevertheless comprehends the truest ideas of beauty of every kind. Victor Cousin says : "*La beauté morale est le fond de toute vraie beauté. Ce fond est un peu couvert et voilé dans la nature. L'art le dégage, et lui donne des formes plus transparentes. C'est par cet endroit, que l'art, quand il connaît bien sa puissance et ses ressources, institue avec la nature une lutte où il peut avoir l'avantage.*" The Sermon on the Mount has a unity which is a foundation-quality of the beautiful. As the deep current of a great river bears everything along with it, so there runs through this discourse one formative idea of the "kingdom of God," as that kingdom descends from heaven into this world and shapes its new results in human nature, society, responsibility, and life ; and the development of

this idea gives to the sermon the highest beauty of form, as well as the most profound depth of meaning—an objective and subjective beauty. Everything, indeed, that the Saviour said had a beauty which makes it attractive and immortal, and which gives it a divine significance, regarded simply as truth.

There is also to be observed in the New Testament, and in the sayings and discourses of our Lord, a frequent use of the words *καλὸς* or *τὸ καλόν*—the same word used by Plato and the Greek writers to signify “the beautiful,” as distinguished from “the true” and “the good.” On the most beautiful specimens of Greek vases, of unknown antiquity, the word *Καλόν* is sometimes written, as if this expressed the perfection of the beautiful in art. We know that *καλὸς* bears the secondary moral meaning of “good,” “true,” “excellent,” “worthy,” as it is everywhere translated in the New Testament; but, as a modern poet has said that the beautiful is only the other side of the true, does this word in the Scriptures always entirely lose its original and proper idea of “beautiful”? In Matt. 26 : 10, where the woman anoints the Saviour’s feet, he says, “Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me” (*ἔργον γὰρ καλόν*). Was not this a beautiful as well as good work? Matt. 5 : 16, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works” (*τὰ καλὰ ἔργα*)—“your beautiful works,” in which the lustrous light of divine truth shines, and attracts men’s eyes by its shining. The Lord called himself *ὁ ποιμὴν καλός*—“the good shepherd;” but why not “the beautiful shepherd”—one in whose character, nature, and work there is a beautiful fitness, propriety, worthiness, to be our spiritual shepherd? A Nestorian convert is reported to have said to another Nestorian, “My brother, have you yet found

Christ to be beautiful?"—as if he had said, "Does the beauty of the holiness and truth that are in Jesus appear to you so clear that it draws out your affections, that it gives you sincere delight to contemplate it, and make it your own?" Christ is the harmonizer of the world of mind and matter; he is mediator in the realms of truth and reason, as well as of faith; and by removing the deformity of sin from the world he makes all things beautiful. Among the primitive Christians it must be confessed that the idea of the beautiful, or the idea of art, was not cultivated, and, we might say, was shunned. The early Christians had a horror of what they saw universally employed and even deified, by heathen religions; but when art was once freed from its associations with heathenism and false religion, then it offered itself to the use of religion as a true thing, as a source of influence and happiness, as a true expression of the human mind. But though not much of art, there is much of true poetry in the very earliest Christian times—as we see, for example, in the worship of the apostolic church, which oftentimes left the earth and mounted to God on the wings of song, "in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs." This was intense feeling expressing itself in modes and forms of art, however simple. In fact, artistic symbolism began very soon to develop itself in the history of Christianity. The newness and greatness of Christian truth inspired pure and exalted poetic feeling. It gave birth to great thoughts, great ideas, and great ideals, never more beautiful in their simple expression than when seen in that morning light of Christianity. Christianity not only touches the conscience, but fires the heart and imagination, and leads them to those heights and depths of which Milton and Dante, after all, are inadequate representatives—the words of

Scripture being the only fit embodiment of the perfect beauty and the supernatural sublimity of revealed truth. Victor Cousin well says, "*L'art ne tient à la religion, ni à la morale ; mais comme elles il nous approche de l'infini, dont il nous manifeste une des formes. Dieu est la source de toute beauté, comme de toute vérité, de toute religion, de toute morale. Le but le plus élevé de l'art est donc de réveiller à sa manière le sentiment de l'infini.*"

(4.) The principle of beauty may come into the sermon because there is an absolute idea of beauty in the human mind. This rests at the bottom of all ideas and conceptions of taste, and is a divinely implanted principle of our nature. Emerson says, "The universal soul is the alone creator of the useful and the beautiful ; therefore to make anything useful or beautiful, the individual must be submitted to the universal mind." In the very soul of humanity this principle of beauty has been created for good ends—there is an ideal existing in this universal soul, of which every individual soul represents a part, and thus may have some true, even if partial, conception of that perfect ideal which is no arbitrary or accidental thing, but which is fixed in the constitution of the mind and rests upon necessary and absolute laws. Plato was the first to enunciate this truth, that the idea of beauty was in the mind, and that its perception in other objects was but the reflection of the mind's ideas—there being no real beauty in matter considered by itself. This theory Plato develops fully in "The Greater Hippias ;" and all æsthetic theories which are worthy of being named since his day are but the applications and varieties of this Platonic assertion. Thus Diderot's theory was, that beauty is the application of the principle of relation in the mind ; that where the mind perceives certain true relations in objects, the sentiment of beauty is awakened.



Sir Joshua Reynolds' theory also reduces beauty to the principle of just proportion, or moderation, which exists in the mind. Alison refers all the principles of beauty to the mental law of association ; it is the waking up of agreeable trains of association by the beautiful object ; for example, a quiet landscape leads the mind to pleasing thoughts of comfort, of the blessings of peace, and of innocent, uncorrupted human enjoyment. We do not mean to say, by this absolute idea of beauty existing in the mind, that there is a distinct æsthetic faculty or power in the mind (though we are not prepared to deny it), else it would seem as if there could not be such innumerable varieties of taste among different people ; but what we mean is, that there is in every mind, even the most uncultivated (and, of course, incomparably more in the cultivated), a certain perception of beauty, which, when it is realized, produces pleasure. The rudest sailor takes pleasure in the beautiful proportions of a fine vessel. Now, if the intuitive perception of beauty had not first existed in the mind, how could it have been cultivated even in this one respect ? This sensibility to beauty must first exist, must be a common intuition of the human mind, but perfection in taste comes of course by culture, by a process of induction, of the disciplining of the critical judgment, of arriving by repeated processes at truer and truer analyses, just as the old Greeks arrived at what may be called the highest possible perfection, or the ideal in the art of sculpture, so that they gave us the masterpieces of art from which we draw our rules and standards ; and none of us can arrive at anything like perfection in taste without a diligent cultivation of the taste, like that of any other faculty ; but the source of the beautiful, whether it is simple or complex, whether made up of a single, or of many, elements,

exists in the mind itself ; real beauty is the reflection of inward ideas and sensations called forth by outward objects. As there is no essential sacredness in a temple, but it is the mind that invests it with the sacred character, so there is no beauty to a landscape if the mind that regards it is not attuned to beauty ; this belongs to the relativity of human knowledge. Of course this sense of beauty sprang from the mind's Original, and who is Himself the *τὸ καλόν*, as he is the *τὸ ἀγαθόν* ; for, as a modern writer says, "The summit of the beautiful is the true." All the works of God would appear beautiful, were we placed in the position of God, and could clearly see those principles of order, harmony, proportion, fitness, unity—that beautiful plan—upon which all is made. These hidden principles of beauty which God has impressed upon nature objectively, and subjectively upon the human mind, are for us to study, as far as they can be discovered. It is thought that a true advance has been made, especially by German writers on æsthetics, upon the Platonic idea, in this respect—that the objective should be joined to the subjective, the real to the ideal, for the production of beauty ; that though beauty does not reside primarily in the object itself, but rather in the idea of the mind that perceives it, yet that this idea would not be sufficient to produce beauty, unless it formed itself upon, or discovered itself in, or expressed itself through, some real form. It must come out of its subjectivity to produce real beauty, as God himself did in Christ, in order to produce a beautiful life ; it must take a form that corresponds to this idea in the mind, and, above all, in the divine mind. Beauty, therefore, to be perfect, requires form as well as conception ; and there is the beautiful form in which every idea, or every pure truth, manifests itself. It does not manifest itself

with the highest degree of perfection, unless it takes *that* particular form, just as the Greeks seem to have come nearer the true or the ideal representation of the highest beauty of the human form, than any other nation. There is, then, the fit, the beautiful form, awaiting every true idea ; and it is the business of the artist, or creator, to discover this. So far, then, as the orator or the preacher is an artist, this is his business—to discover the fit and beautiful form of his conception of truth, or of any given truth ; and this is right, because it is God's own way of working. Some rhetorical writers have expressed themselves clearly on this point. "Oratory must therefore, of necessity, express beauty, in order to its perfection. This cannot be said of the product of any mechanical art."<sup>1</sup> "Taste is nothing but the selection of the befitting and the adapted, guided by ethical ideas. Its proper home, therefore, is within the sphere of eloquence. But eloquence, in respect of taste, must always differ from poetry, in that, in the case of eloquence, the selection of the befitting and adapted is accompanied with the design of exciting affection ; while taste in the poet, on the contrary, is a quality that works without any design in view, except the mere production of beauty."<sup>2</sup>

If, therefore, the principle of beauty enters into the highest affection toward God, if it serves to render truth more attractive, if it is found in the Christian Scriptures, and belongs essentially to Christianity itself, and if it exists absolutely in the human mind, and, therefore, of course, primarily in the divine mind, it is a proper object (in its place) of attention and study to the preacher of divine truth.

We have said that it is probably true, though we are

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<sup>1</sup> Day's "Rhetoric," p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Theremin's Essay, p. 132.

by no means assured on this point, that the principle of beauty could not be considered as forming by itself a separate faculty or department of the mind, but that rather it seems to depend upon, or to be the combined result of, certain intuitive tastes, perceptions, laws, or principles of the mind, which are fitted to be called into exercise by whatever corresponds to them in outer objects, by whatever is calculated to draw them out, or give them expression ; and we would not be understood as saying that there is no such thing as beauty existing inherently in an object, as in a strong and beautiful man, or a beautiful woman, or a beautiful landscape, or a beautiful work of art, independently of the mental perception of beauty which it calls forth ; but what we mean is that the beautiful object is the secondary thing ; it is the product of a higher first cause, namely, the idea, or faculty, of beauty in the divine or the human mind. It is the result of this original power, or it is simply the occasion that calls it into exercise. But there is still one faculty of the mind which does peculiarly preside over the whole field of the æsthetical, and that is, the *imagination*, or the representative faculty of the mind, whose use and place in preaching no one will deny.

The imagination, according to Coleridge, is “ that power of the finite mind which (as far as possible) corresponds to the creative power in the infinite mind, and which struggles to idealize and unify all objects of perception.”

The  
imagination  
in oratory  
and  
preaching.

This noble faculty, which idealizes and perfects, which combines many perceptions into one new and living whole, enters largely into all the æsthetic arts, and cannot be disregarded by the preacher, any more than by the poet or painter. This is *par excellence* the faculty of inven-



tion—the greatest faculty of the true artist. “While common sense looks at things or visible nature as real and final facts, poetry, or the imagination which dictates it, is a second sight, looking through these and using them as types or words for thoughts which they signify.” This is what gives one preacher’s sermon a freshness, originality, and beauty of form, which another preacher’s sermon, of equal force of thought, entirely lacks. It is this that, more than anything else (rhetorically speaking), takes a sermon out of the commonplace, and makes it individual. It makes a new mental creation, though it may add nothing to the actual stock of knowledge which existed before. But it casts ideas into new forms—more beautiful and powerful forms. Mr. Emerson says, “Nothing so marks as imaginative expression, a figurative expression wrests attention, and is remarked and repeated. How often has a phrase of this kind made a reputation. Pythagoras’ ‘Golden Sayings’ were such, and Socrates’ and Bonaparte’s. The aged Michael Angelo indicates his perpetual study as in boyhood by the remark, ‘I carry my satchel still.’ Machiavel described the papacy as a ‘stone inserted in the body of Italy to keep the wound open.’”

The preacher’s imagination should be manifested in this renewing power which is infused into his thought, rather than in any peculiar use of startling metaphors, or of meteoric flights of fancy. There is what may be called the shaping spirit of the imagination. “The poet does not create out of nothing, but his mind so acts on the things of the universe, material and immaterial, that each composition is in effect a new creation ; and so it might be said of the orator. The higher *moral uses of the imagination*, the prophetic gift of the true seer and preacher of truth, should not be lost sight of. When their imagination was

purified and intensified by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the prophets, as Isaiah and Ezekiel, were enabled to penetrate into the secret iniquity of their age, as into a picture-chamber of imagery ; and they saw also into the mysteriously hidden workings of the wicked heart. By this moral insight, purified if not directly inspired by the Spirit of God, the preacher now is able, with more or less clearness, to perceive truth and error, and the moral universe, and hell, and heaven, and God." The following passage from *Blackwood* (January, 1870) sets forth this specific moral quality or power of the imagination : " The office of the imagination as an intellectual agent has been much discussed and much exalted, but what we may call its moral influence has been but little taken into consideration. Invention is but one of its gifts, and, we believe, not the greatest. Its highest mission in this world is that of comprehension. Half the wickedness, half the cruelties and harsh judgments of life, spring from a deficiency of this all-important quality. The mind which cannot put itself in another's place, nor identify another's point of view, is, however just and scrupulous, continually in danger of making false decisions. There is such a thing to be sure as a redundancy of imagination and sympathy, which goes far to obliterate the limits of right and wrong altogether, and to account for every action, however base ; but deficiency is much more general than redundancy." And how great a quality this moral imagination in a preacher—to be able to put himself in the point of view of another—of the speaker or actor in the passage of Scripture he is treating, but, above all, of the hearer to whom he is speaking—how this single great quality would tend to increase his skill, his adaptation, his comprehensiveness, his whole power in reading and reaching the hearts of men.

We would not be understood as saying that the simple cultivation of the preacher's imagination is in itself a cultivation of good taste in preaching ; but only this, that the imagination is that faculty of the mind which has especially to do with the creation and the cultivation of what is true, fit, and beautiful in art ; with the art of writing and oratory ; yet the imagination may be cultivated in the wrong direction : it may be totally devoid of taste ; it may be vivid but coarse, grotesque, and horrible ; it may be strong, like that of Ignatius Loyola or St. Dominic, but with the fierce fanaticism and lurid light that characterized those minds. Goethe says, " Nothing is more fearful in art than an imagination unregulated by good taste." The use of the imagination as bodying forth in concrete forms moral ideas, is its highest use, and this power is grandly illustrated in a preacher like Dr. Bushnell. He himself is an example of what he calls the " faith-power of the imagination," that power which brings the unseen and the supernatural into view.

The greatest preachers since the apostle Paul's day have been distinguished for the presence of the imaginative faculty in a marked degree. Chrysostom's imagination led him into the living fields of illustration, and his illustrations are as homely and vivid as when they were first spoken to the great congregations in Antioch and Byzantium. Augustine's imagination was an inward fire, that lighted up spiritual realms with a glow like that of his own African landscape. Luther's imagination made unseen things real—more real than the things of sight. Jeremy Taylor's imagination was truly imperial ; and one cannot open his pages without coming into the presence of new and resplendent forms of a fresh, opulent creation ; of a superabundance, indeed, of imagery, but so genuine, and the healthy product of such sound and

substantial thought, that it resembles beautiful clusters of grapes, which we feed upon while we enjoy the beauty that is so varied and rich a growth of generous nature. John Howe's imagination entered into his most abstruse speculations, and now and then, as in his "Living Temple," led him into noble and extended imagery. Robert Hall's imagination sustained him through the most elevated reasoning upon moral themes. Edward Irving, who, with all his errors, was a great preacher, had an imagination at times Miltonic, and it was so regarded by his friend Coleridge. Whitefield's imagination was extremely vivid, inflaming his whole language, and making it blaze with a meaning and fire which now seem dull, compared to the moment of delivery. Among our own great preachers, Jonathan Edwards manifested this faculty in a more undemonstrative and hidden way, not so much in his forms of language as in the power of pure speculation, of projecting or creating for himself an ideal world of theory. John Mason, too, was not wanting in this power which animated his reasoning faculties. Lyman Beecher had a vigorous imagination, which made his method of speaking and argument quite original, and his preaching "logic on fire."

There has been, heretofore, it may be, a too great curbing of the imagination in our New England style of preaching, and thus a loss of power ; for the

**Essential principles of taste in preaching.** imagination is the main-spring of invention in the orator or writer ; and when the imagination is once fired, all the other faculties of the mind are set in motion. But we would speak of the imagination in this connection particularly, because it enables the preacher to produce the first and perhaps greatest result of the working of the æsthetic principle in a sermon, viz., unity of form. We



would mention this, then, as the first essential principle of taste, viewed in relation to a discourse.

(1.) Unity of form. It is thought that Augustine, in his "Treatise on Beauty," which has been lost, made "the beauty of all objects to depend on their unity, or on the perception of the principle or design which fixed the relations

Unity of  
form.

of the various parts, and presented them to the intellect or imagination as one harmonious whole."<sup>1</sup> Although this is a partial theory, yet it recognizes the chief property of every beautiful object of nature and true work of art. A range of mountains, an oak tree, the group of the Laocoön, the Transfiguration by Raphael, the interior of the Milan Cathedral, though each composed of many, even myriad, parts, yet make but one impression; they give the idea of one creative mind by which they were formed. In the greatest poems, also, how extremely simple is the creative fiat which runs through them, and organizes their numberless details into one grand whole, as in the "Iliad," the "Prometheus Vincetus," and the "Paradise Lost"! A child could tell the story of each almost in a breath.

This unifying power in these great works, and in all true works of art, is doubtless that of the imagination, as Coleridge defines it.

In works of thought and reflection, as in a sermon, the imagination seeks after complete representations of truth; even as Schiller defines the object of true literary composition to be "to exhibit the universal in the particular." The orator or preacher should strive, through the force of his own mind, to give wholeness of form to the subject, causing it to stand out like a finished statue,

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<sup>1</sup> "Encyclopædia Britannica," art. Beauty.

apart from all others, with nothing to be added, and nothing to be taken away. Emerson says, "In a work of art the parts must be subordinated to the ideal, and everything individual abstracted, so that it shall be a production of the universal soul. The orator surrenders himself to what the occasion should say, not to his individual will, but to the principle which he advocates. Whatever is beautiful rests on the foundation of the necessary. Nothing is arbitrary, nothing is insulated in beauty. Every genuine work of art has as much reason for being as the earth and the sun." In every age and under all conditions there are evidences and manifestations of this universal beauty ; this permanent as contradistinguished from contingent beauty, removed from the narrow bounds of the local and partial, of that which changes with the changes of history, custom, and taste, and standing in its own divine and acknowledged perfection. But it is only when the creative imagination has brooded over a subject, has vitalized it with its own free spirit, and has wrought it together in the heat of its thought, that this universal and beautiful result—this bringing of all into one whole—is produced. This was the power of Dr. Chalmers. His imagination, which was his prime intellectual faculty as a preacher, was usually employed in developing, enhancing, and amplifying *one* idea, one truth of the divine word, so that it stood out at last in its majestic proportions to attract by its beauty or to overpower by its magnitude. His sermons are deep practical contemplations of truth flowing out from one central thought that opens into the divine word itself ; they spread out and spread out, till each becomes as it were a lake or a sea on which the hearers' minds are lifted up and borne onward.

This vital unity of form and fresh original completeness are particularly seen in the sermons of the late F. W.

Robertson. They attract by their inherent nobleness. In Dr. Bushnell's sermons (to which we have before alluded) there is an exhibition of this same clear, bold bodying forth of thought, this plastic power of the imagination, which the dry scientific intellect cannot reach. Will not an audience be impressed by the shortest living sermon of this kind more than by the most elaborate and dull scientific treatise that was ever preached? There must be thought, but it must be thought in a living form. No one wishes to see truth dissected but truth alive. No one cares to see the *disjecta membra* of Osiris, but the living divinity. Another principal characteristic of the æsthetic element in preaching is—

(2.) Grace of movement. "Grace" is from *gratus*, free, or that which agrees with willingly, which is congruous, which moves in harmony. It consists of an harmonious arrangement of parts, Grace of  
movement. so that all move easily. It is what Schiller calls "the play movement," as contrasted with the movement by rule. This unconstrained movement of the mind should run through the sermon. All traces of work and painful labor should be taken out of it. All stiff and unnatural juxtapositions of ideas or sentiments should be removed. The thought should flow freely, even if not rapidly. The audience, though aroused to active thought, should not be called upon to think the subject out *de origine*, laboriously, with the speaker. He should give them the results rather than the processes of his thought. There may be a world of hard labor bestowed upon the sermon—the more the better; but this should not be displayed. The sweat of toil should be wiped from it. A free, animated, and even joyous movement should appear through it all. It may be solemn, but should not be heavy. All men love to be lured into this

sense of perfect freedom in a discourse—to believe that all is natural and unforced. Even if they must perceive that a sermon is the fruit of great previous study, yet for the moment they would believe that it is the spontaneous outpouring of the speaker's own soul. The preacher should strive to be an unbound man, not one forced to think and speak what another man thinks and speaks ; but all men should see that he is himself, that his thoughts are free, and spoken because they are his own. Then he will be graceful. Freedom is necessary to grace. The intellect creates method ; the imagination, unity ; but the heart, grace. Grace comes from inward sympathy. Grace, looked at in this sense, is not a weak quality in a speaker ; it is nothing less than power moving freely. Grace springs from that aroused and joyful energy of the mind which is one of its deepest sources of power. When a speaker moves with this free and graceful energy, he carries his audience with him. We will mention but one other quality of good taste in preaching :

(3.) Propriety of thought and expression. We mean here a proper form, rather than substance, of thought.

Propriety of thought and expression. Propriety has been defined to be "a fine and true conformity to all relations which may surround an object." These may be relations of truth, time, place, circumstance, or whatsoever is befitting the right treatment of the particular theme in hand. This quality of beauty would lead the preacher to fall into no error, (*a.*) in the choice of his subject ; (*b.*) in the fitness of his arguments ; (*c.*) in the perception of the true character of the occasion ; (*d.*) in the adaptations of thought and illustration to the intellectual and spiritual state of his audience. All truth is good, but one truth is fitter than another at a certain time. In the treatment of certain subjects there



are sets of ideas congruous and totally incongruous to those subjects. In the treatment of texts, this principle of "propriety" is peculiarly needed; a text which breathes the hope and joy of the gospel should not be made a sledge-hammer to crush the mind with the terrors of the law. The fine cultivation of this æsthetic principle of "propriety" is to be particularly seen in a preacher's illustrations, and in the moderation and control of the wayward and violent imagination. (c.) In the fitness and dignity of his language. While language should be plain, it never should be low in the pulpit. Neither cant nor slang should be allowed. The sermon is a portion of divine worship, and its ground-tone should be reverential without losing its humanness, its nature, its freedom. Occasional homely strength and great plainness of language is not at all what we mean, but grossness of imagination, vulgar smartness, flippancy of thought and phrase, absolute ill-taste in word, image, and expression.

We might speak of many other important æsthetic principles which enter into oratory, and even sacred oratory, such as proportion, disposition, neatness, correctness, color, tone, light and shade, novelty, simplicity, variety, sublimity, expression, and, above all, truth; but we cannot here go further into this subject. Many of the principles of good taste in writing and speaking will necessarily be noticed when we treat more particularly of Style.

The best way to cultivate the æsthetic sense, or good taste, is by a constant study of nature.

Art is not nature, nor the servile copying of nature—as if, in Coleridge's words, the artist should pick nature's pockets—but it has its beginnings in nature, and nature is also its best

How to  
cultivate the  
taste.

guide and teacher. Goethe says that all any artist has to do is to study nature ; and though this remark may be too sweeping—for nature itself is, in some sense, imperfect, and matter could not manifest to us the perfect idea of God—yet from nature we draw those elementary principles of art which the human mind, made by God, is capable of improving upon, from the higher ideal within. Dr. Chalmers was a genuine lover of natural scenery; and the influence of the Scottish mountains and lakes, which were familiar to him, and revisited by him on every possible occasion, is perceptible in the nobleness, and, sometimes, sublimity, of his style. Calvin, on the contrary, seems to have caught little or nothing from the influence of the grander scenery about his home. The careful study of one or more of the fine arts, such as painting, or architecture, especially the last, which is an accurate and scientific art, is also highly improving to the æsthetic sense. “ *Etenim omnes artes, quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognitione quadam inter se continentur.*”<sup>1</sup> A study of the best poets develops and cultivates the true love of the beautiful. Above all, let the heart be pure and joyful and it will see beauty in all things. Ruskin says, “ The sensation of beauty (that is, the highest beauty) is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart.” There is everlasting beauty in the works of God. In the meditation of his word and works we best reach the source of the beautiful. Do we not feel that in the perfect life of God, to which, if we are good, we tend, all that is incongruous and earthly, all that is not truly beautiful, will vanish away ?

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<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *Pro Archia*, I., 2.

SEC. 27. *Rhetorical Criticism.*

Criticism (from *κρίνω*, to judge) relates to the art of judging according to those principles which belong to an object with reference to its particular nature and design ; it is the application of right principles to any special object or work ; for though there are common principles that may have relation to all things that are proper subjects of criticism, yet there are specific principles that apply to individual objects and individual classes of objects, having reference to their peculiar nature and intent. The principles of criticism are involved in the nature of the subject. Thus the canons of criticism that would guide us in judging of an historical work would differ in some essential respects from those which would govern us in judging of a production of literature, or of the rhetorical art, since the main intention which predominates in a particular work must necessarily exert a controlling influence upon the elements of criticism comprehended in that work. If, for example, the end be the production of beauty, as in a work of pure art, then the office of criticism is, in the first place, to lay down clearly those principles by which beauty is to be attained, and those ideas, or ideals, which set forth true conceptions of the beautiful, and then to judge of the merits or faults of particular works of art by the standard which has been thus established. The end of history, on the other hand, is not beauty but truth ; and historical criticism would have for its more special object the discrimination between the true and the false, the sifting of evidence, the analysis of character and motive, the search for the true in its more special limitations and conditions, the bringing to bear of the nicest tests upon every fact and event ; for the great

**Criticism  
defined.**

use of history is to stimulate us by the influence of good examples followed out to their results, so that truth is the main or absolute necessity in the study of history ; and again, how different is the field of logical criticism from that of either literary or historical criticism, logical criticism being the analysis of the process of the mind in pure thought, or in the creation of a genuine thought-product.

When we come to rhetorical criticism, with which we have now specially to do, we find ourselves shut up to the department of oratorical production, whose end is a mixed one, combining beauty with reason and utility. The orator does not aim simply to be eloquent but to be true ; and not simply to be true but to be useful, or to effect some great practical end ; and if he be eloquent or forcible in style, it is not for the sake of being eloquent, but for the sake of securing some worthy and important object.

**What is  
rhetorical  
criticism.**

The chief field of rhetorical criticism is style, using that word, however, in its largest and best sense. It judges, or should do so, of the merits and faults of style from a standard of invariable principles which form a higher code, derived from nature and from the best models of writing and speaking—and, in the homiletical department of rhetoric, from the best standards of preaching.

The critical faculty which is called into play in rhetorical criticism, though not in itself a productive quality of the mind, or one that aids especially in the development of rhetorical power—for criticism is essentially analytic and destructive rather than synthetic and creative—yet comes in its right place after the productive faculties have done their work ; and it has no office without them, being itself the purely judicial function of the mind.

But this judicial faculty of the mind has as true a place



and object as the productive faculty ; neither does it require the possession of the productive or creative faculty in any eminent degree that one may be a good critic. One who is not a painter may still be a good critic of painting ; one who is not a poet may be a good critic of poetry ; one who is not even an orator or preacher may be a good critic of preaching. Critics may, it is true, make mistakes in regard to a work of art, or a product of the human mind, as contemporaneous critics did in relation to Milton's " *Paradise Lost*," and to Wordsworth's poems ; but it is the critical faculty after all which judges of these works and assigns them their proper place ; for even these great authors must make their final appeal to those psychological and artistic standards of judgment that are invariable and universal. This critical faculty comes as a corrective and regulative one, measuring the work performed by some perfect measure, or by the application of some right knowledge of the subject in its truest and most comprehensive principles. And, above all, one should have the measure in himself, so as to be able to test and compare for himself, constantly increasing his knowledge, and thus approximating more and more to the true standard ; never falling into the fatal error of self-conceit, and of thinking himself to be faultless, but, in another's words, " laboring on and cherishing the holy fire of discontent with all his attainments."

The first quality, then, of a good critic we would say, is Knowledge. He should possess some true knowledge of the field in which he exercises criticism. He should be able, to some extent at least, to comprehend the individual in the universal, or the underlying principles of all art which are, when properly viewed, seen to be bound together by a common bond. Yet knowledge alone is not sufficient

Qualities  
of the  
critic.

to make the good critic, for the critical faculty is, in some sense, an innate faculty of the mind, and although it is developed by exercise and education, it has its origin in certain subtle and profound qualities of the intellect which belong to the mental constitution, so that some possess intuitively the critical faculty to a much greater degree than others.

Next, then, to the element of knowledge is the element of Taste, or that literary sensibility which is partly a gift of nature, and partly the fruit of culture. It is mainly instinctive or intuitive, being a sense of proportion and fitness, quantity and quality, order and relation, which exists in the mind itself, and which, though more vague and unscientific in its origin, as belonging to the mental sensibilities, yet by its education and disciplined use becomes almost certain in its operation, like a pure intellectual judgment.

The third quality of the critic which may be mentioned is Truth, or the love of truth. Matthew Arnold says that it is the business of the critical power "in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." The critic must be able to enter into the real nature of the subject, and must live in the true and best ideas of the art, or the department of truth in which he exercises his critical skill. He must cherish high ideals of it. He must at least have some well-settled order of ideas, some comprehensive philosophy of criticism, some actual foundation in principles, or his criticism will be at best but a snap-judgment. And at the same time he should be conversant with the real working of those principles, or the influence and tendencies of certain ideas or systems of ideas, so that he has a practical appreciation of their truth.

Upon the uses of rhetorical criticism Richard Grant

White thus remarks : " Criticism, however, is needed to keep our language from deterioration, to defend it against the assaults of presuming half-knowledge, always bolder than wisdom, always more perniciously intrusive than conscious ignorance. Language must always be made by the mass of those who use it ; but when that mass is misled by a little learning—a dangerous thing only as edge tools are dangerous to those who will handle them without understanding their use—and undertakes to make language according to knowledge rather than by instinct, confusion and disaster can be warded off only by criticism. Criticism is the child and handmaid of reflection. It works by censure, and censure implies a standard."<sup>1</sup> We have made this quotation chiefly for the sake of the last sentence, " It works by censure, and censure implies a standard."

Uses of  
rhetorical  
criticism.

The chief practical use and direction of criticism undoubtedly is to discover and point out faults, and thus to lead to their correction.

By the application of some right rule or principle the exact deviation from right in the particular case is to be brought out, and here the exercise of the judgment in criticism is of the utmost importance. This critical judgment is the power of separating the true from the false, the power of clear discrimination, the power of deciding between opposites, in which the unimpassioned judicial reason predominates while the literary sense is not wanting. It implies the ability also to state good grounds for the judgment pronounced, and thus there should be in the critic himself some foundations of truth, of right principles, and of good taste, some accu-

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<sup>1</sup> " Words and their Uses," p. 26.

rate standard of judgment, for his criticism to be of authority. But while the deviation from right, while the censure of error, while the pointing out of faults is, it cannot be questioned, the main practical use and idea of criticism, yet there is no doubt but that, looking at criticism purely as a matter relating to art, it is also a true and noble use of criticism (and in this idea Mr. Ruskin concurs) to be able to point out the excellences and beauties of a given work, to appreciate and make known its merits and its conformity to the universal standard of beauty and truth. Perhaps this is the highest end of criticism, to settle the merits of human productions. The highest criticism is that which points out great ideals and is able to discover every approximation, however slight, to those ideals.

This is a noble and pleasing side of criticism which is sometimes perhaps overlooked, but it is not strange that it should be overlooked, since the work-a-day function of criticism is not to praise but rather to correct, and the actual profitableness of criticism depends upon its ability to mark defects more than to mark beauties. The last, as it were, mark themselves. Beauty needs no praise. It were almost absurd for us to praise the Portland vase, or a statue of Phidias, or an oration of Demosthenes.

In regard to rhetorical criticism as a practical exercise among students and homiletically adapted, its advantages are by no means confined to the subject of it, though its benefits doubtless mainly accrue to the subject of it; but the critic himself is to a certain degree profited by this exercise, when rightly conducted.

He is thrown back upon his knowledge of principles, and is forced to assume a high, just, and comprehensive view of the theme. Every mental faculty is appealed to; rapid generalization and comparison are demanded;



the powers of analysis and of positive judgment are developed. To take even an ordinary written sentence apart, to analyze it and show wherein it violates truth, taste, and good grammar and good sense ; or, above all, positively to build up a new plan of discourse upon right principles—this tends to give the mind alertness, concentration, and self-confidence.

Nevertheless he who is the most benefited is the subject of criticism ; for so invariably self-confident is human nature that he who is never told his faults is rarely apt to discover them. We criticise others but not ourselves. We commit the same faults that we criticise in others ; so that he who is not tried can rarely be perfect ; for few men have become good writers who have not at some time in their lives undergone severe criticism. Shakespeare himself endured it at the hands of his contemporaries, though it was of a jealous and envenomed sort ; but he who availed himself of everything and passed over nothing, probably profited even by that. If the poet Keats was killed by criticism, Byron was thoroughly aroused by it ; and what was singular, the criticism in the case of the first was in the main unjust, and in the case of the second was deserved.

Among distinguished public orators, the younger Pitt, Charles James Fox in his early days, Sheridan, and D'Israeli are said to have been greatly improved and developed as speakers by the excessively harsh ordeal of criticism which they underwent ; for they had the sagacity and nerve to profit by it. By their power of will they turned their disadvantages into advantages ; they snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, and they made even their enemies teach them success. Burke says : " Our antagonist is our helper. This conflict with difficulty obliges us to an intimate acquaintance with our

object, and compels us to consider it in all its relations. It will not suffer us to be superficial."

Criticism for the moment humbles, but he who would build high must build low. Nothing touches a man's pride more sensitively than the criticism of his style of writing and speaking, since "the style is the man."

But no honest criticism is to be totally disregarded or despised. In the biography of Dr. Griffin it is related that that divine used often to read his sermon to his black servant Horace before preaching it, and he did not despise suggestions from such a quarter. The criticism, in the particular form in which it comes, may be wrong or unjust and sometimes malicious; but it may nevertheless have been called forth by some real defect which lies deep in the thought or the style—something perhaps indefinable to the critic himself, but which he perceives instinctively even if he is not able fairly to set it forth.

At all events, a preacher may not expect to escape criticism at some time of his public career. He will be criticised severely and unmercifully by somebody, and perhaps by those who are opposed or inimical to him. He cannot avoid this. Is it not then better to be criticised openly by one's friends, from the motive of friendship, and thus to be fortified and prepared against the criticism of opposers and of the world? In this way one may be saved from future mortification, disappointment, and even worse injury and shame.

In the criticism of sermons before the theological class, we consider the friendly criticisms of classmates to be of more practical use than that of the instructor himself, and the instructor, if he be wise, should, we think, expect and request his students to do the principal share of it, to throw themselves into it with all their heart and strength as a most improving exercise. Young men know each

other, and each other's merits and faults better than their instructor knows them, and they should feel the burden of responsibility laid upon them to help each other in this really high and unselfish way.

In regard to the subject-matter of rhetorical criticism or the criticism of a discourse, this is comprehended chiefly in two particulars, 1st. Form, or the expression into which the thought is cast as the grand instrument of persuasion, or what is commonly called style ; and, 2d. Matter, or the substance of the thought itself, both in its essence and its arrangement, or plan ; and especially in this last essential in the criticism of a sermon. We would add that the criticism of style extends even to purely grammatical criticism. This would include verbal criticism or the criticism of words in regard to their usage, according to the best standards, and the composition of sentences, or the syntactical structure of sentences, so as to avoid all equivocal expressions, ambiguous constructions, and wrong arrangements of phrases, and so as to give the greatest force and effectiveness to style. The higher idea of the criticism of style itself is, however, rational and spiritual, rather than merely verbal. In the subject of preaching of course the matter or the thought is more important than the style as the great theme of criticism. As to the spirit in which this exercise of rhetorical criticism should be made, it should ever be conducted in the spirit of perfect candor and love ; and when criticism is thus guarded by the spirit of love, and aims solely at truth and the good of the subject, it is more apt to attain its true object and to do good than if it proceed from a spirit of satire or a bitter spirit. All criticism should thus be "*benefica, non venefica.*"

**Subject-matter of criticism.**

**Spirit in which criticism should be made and received.**

But very much of the true benefits of rhetorical criticism depends upon its right reception by the subject of it. If the subject of it gives way to a weak chagrin, or suffers himself to be discouraged and overwhelmed, it will do him but little good. Or if he refuses to acknowledge the justice of the criticism, even if true, and fights against it, he only confirms himself in his habitual error. He should not, it is true, yield his independence of mind to any man, for he may be right after all, and his critic may be wrong. A man must have confidence in himself and in his own thinking or he is lost as a speaker. This is the first requisite of good speaking, as another says, "For when the speaker fully believes that his thought is good, and ought to have weight with the audience, this conviction releases him from the anxiety and torment of fear lest he should fail, or make a fool of himself, and thus tends to purify his elocution from the vices with which the expression of these feelings must otherwise load and enfeeble it." Yet he is bound, at the same time, to give every criticism the just consideration which it deserves. Above all, he should set himself manfully to work to overcome the fault or faults which criticism has developed. Instead of despising it he should conquer it. Thus rhetorical criticism may, in this manner, benefit the *character* as much as it does the style or preaching of a man; for he who has the good sense and manliness to recognize and overcome a fault of style in speaking, will probably have the power of will to overcome a fault of character, and thus, in the main, the whole man will be improved by friendly and judicious criticism.

As a general remark, more especially upon the criticism of preachers and of sermons, we would say that to a great extent sermons take themselves out of the common



sphere of rhetorical criticism, on account of their more elevated and serious aim which rises above the idea of mere art, of literary taste, and of rhetorical standards and measures, into the region of moral and spiritual truth.

**Criticism  
of preaching  
and sermons.**

Where there is in the preacher and in his sermon sincerity, faithfulness to divine truth, earnestness of aim directed to the salvation of souls, we do not feel like applying to him or to it the fine chemical tests of rhetorical criticism.

Power of any sort is above criticism.

The poison that kills or the medicine that cures is beyond human praise or blame. Therefore in the criticism of sermons, we should always have the feeling that in some sense a good sermon, inspired by the Word and Spirit of God, is a divine work, and is thus beyond human praise and blame ; it comes from higher sources than either, and follows higher laws than either ; it asks not your or my approbation ; it cares not for your or my censure ; it looks to the judgment and approval of God.

But, on the other hand, in so far as a sermon is a human production, is a work of art, is a discourse formed upon rhetorical and ethical principles, we have a right to judge its style, its reasoning, its theology, its conclusions, in a word both its matter and its manner ; and this is especially needful in the time of preparation, when, it must be confessed, sermons are generally more or less works of art, more or less artificial, smack more or less of the schools both of theology and rhetoric, and are not yet entirely filled with the spirit of a divine earnestness, simplicity, and practicality.

We cannot do better in closing this brief lecture on rhetorical criticism than to quote an extended passage applying chiefly to the manner or delivery of sermons,

which we have freely translated from Athanase Coquerel's "*Observations pratiques sur la Prédication*," in a chapter entitled "The Benefit of Good Counsels," while we must regard with some allowance the French point of view in which some of the remarks are made. He goes on to say :

"Since no preacher knows how he preaches, some one must tell him how he preaches. If sins of ignorance are rare in morals they are common in eloquence, and when one tries of himself to correct them he knows not really whether they are corrected or not. The errors which the orator unconsciously contracts are ordinarily what are called, and very justly, natural errors, so that one acquires a deplorable facility of falling into them every moment, and a long and painful watchfulness is necessary, a sort of struggle with one's self, to extirpate them. We can apply these remarks especially to two departments of delivery, the difficulty and importance of which are extreme, viz., gesture and the inflections of the voice. Without having recourse to an intelligent, attentive, and severe criticism, one may not be certain that his gesture and accentuation have not considerable defects ; and how many preachers injure themselves seriously, and compromise their success by continual indulgence in some odd movement of the arms or hands which has become a habit, or by tones, cadences, and tremblings of voice, repeated to weariness though without intention.

"How many others fall into the serious fault of gesticulating, not by sentences, but by words ; which produces a jerking gesture of the most melancholy effect, and leads to clipping each period into as many parts as one makes motions ! The constant recurrence of these

Quotation  
from  
Coquerel  
on the  
benefits of  
friendly  
criticism.

faults of delivery is a manifest proof of the lack of good criticism.

“One can go further still and maintain that neither the exactness and elegance of gesture, nor the happy use of the voice are things one learns but things which one corrects. Every one practises that kind of gesticulation which comes to him naturally ; every one has an accent of voice with which he speaks naturally, and an habitual direction of the movements of the body, of the head, of the chest, of the arms, and even of the fingers. The natural intonations of the voice grow with us, are formed through infancy, youth, and manhood, and engraft themselves, so to speak, upon our person long before age, or study, or the exercise of the oratorical art, commences. Thus every one reaches his first essays in eloquence, having a trick of gesticulating in a certain manner, of uttering the sound of his voice by impressing upon it a certain tone. This natural gesture he may strive to regulate ; this voice already formed he may strive to modulate ; but success seems impossible if one attempts to teach one’s self these portions of the art. One learns them only by practical directions and counsels.

“Above all, upon the subject of intonation one can take advice with confidence ; for it is easier to criticise with justice tones than gestures, and orators ought to be happy that it is so, for the use of the voice in oratorical art is more important than gesticulation. Varied, happy, and rapid inflections are the only resource against the monotony of elocution—monotony—the scourge of orators. A monotonous preacher will never be eloquent ; and this fault is, of all, the most troublesome, because nothing counterbalances it, nothing makes up for it, it distils dulness from the heights of the pulpit, it invites sleep and breaks the attention of those who succeed in keeping

awake ; its words fall, one by one, in regular innumerable succession.

“ The saintly Bénédict Prévost, professor at Montauban, says of monotonous preachers, ‘ When I hear their discourses it seems to me that it snows.’ I remember after my return to Paris (retiring from the faculty of Montauban), John Monod, the venerable pastor, with whom my family has had most intimate relations even before baptismal fonts, and whose preaching was at once liberal and full of unction, asked me to come to see him. Hardly was I seated in his study when he rose, took a volume of Saurin, opened it at the peroration of the sermon upon the ‘ eternity of punishment,’ and said to me, ‘ Read me that.’ He listened to me with attention without interrupting me, and afterwards addressing to me encouragements full of kindness he gave me much advisory criticism upon the inflections and their superfluity in this reading exercise which I profited by, and which are still after many years fresh in my memory. One cannot then urge too strongly upon students of our academies, candidates for the holy ministry, young pastors, and above all those who have to preach often and who have no colleagues, to choose among their accustomed audience a friend to criticise, and to question after the sermon upon the impressions he has received, upon the progress or the relapses which have struck him. It is useless to add that two advisers are better than one, and their observations could be compared with benefit ; and it is very rare for one of our churches to be so reduced as not to number in its bosom some faithful ones to render this kind of service. At least it matters not that we obtain a literary critic, for common sense will suffice.

“ Sometimes those will not be found in a winter audience who will be present in a summer one. In many rural



districts during the cold season the inhabitants of the village and the farms in the vicinity alone are present—when spring returns, the mansions, the country seats of the neighborhood, receive their guests, and these annual returns of a more cultivated population offer a precious resource. If a critic, or an adviser has been found in one of these families, it will be very useful to seek to know from him what the community has gained or lost in the course of a season.

“As for the rest, I come back upon the situation of an isolated preacher in rural churches. [There will always be strong-minded hearers fully able to criticise in these rural congregations if we transfer the scene from France to our own country almost anywhere.]

“The considerations presented thus far suffice perhaps to demonstrate the uselessness of systems and treatises of oratorical art, purely theoretical. If there be an art which is learned only by practice it is this art, and if this art is the most personal of all, that in which all imitation conducts only to the saddest mistakes, that of which the two principal parts, gesture and accent, are only amended and are not acquired, and that before study they are already well or ill acquired, the weakness of mere theory is evident. Of what service are lessons of this kind to a pupil incapacitated from knowing himself, and who finds himself under the necessity of asking from a third person how the criticisms are to be applied.

“My persuasion of the justness of these views is so heartfelt that I am led to consider it a duty to write these pages. The most salutary advice is that which experience suggests, and who can better advise preachers than a preacher like themselves?

“Should one accuse me of digression, here is the place to make some observations upon the course of sacred

eloquence in our faculties. We are allowed to doubt whether their instruction receives the necessary development and yields all the fruits which one has a right to expect. We may inquire, especially, if the regular and frequent exercises of recitation and declamation of pieces taken from our loftiest literature are put in practice and followed up assiduously by the pupils. I once assisted at lessons of this kind, directed at Geneva, by one of the most eminent men of his academy, my excellent friend Professor Munier. I came out exceedingly struck with the method in use, and with the immense benefit which students might derive from it. This method is very simple—one of the young men recites a series of verses, or a fragment of prose—his fellow-students are called upon to make fraternal criticisms upon his delivery, and the professor sums up in discussing in his turn the qualities or the defects of the declamation listened to and the remarks which it has excited. Perhaps it would be best to give the preference to pieces of poetry, because the rhythm forces the memory to greater attention and assists it at the same time, prose not permitting the substitution of one word for another. This method of teaching eloquence is the only one which teaches it really, and if these exercises are not in frequent use in our faculties they ought to be introduced or multiplied. This method, it is seen, is essentially practical, avoids all peril of imitation or of copying, and resolves itself into furnishing the propitious occasion for useful advice. For a single amendment, or to better express myself, a single addition to be made to this system, I would advise the study, phrase by phrase, before memorizing it, of the sense of the poetical extract or the selected prose, not of the grammatical but of that which may be called the oratorical sense. This tends to emphasize the sentiments with which the

poet or orator was animated and the effect which he designed to produce upon those who listen. All the true shades of elocution are thus indicated, and it may be affirmed that the true merit of delivery, the most vehement as well as the most tranquil, consists in speaking truthfully. In the excitement of delivery if you utter a cry of fury with the same tone as one of despair ; in the calmness of delivery if you speak a word of human praise with the same tone as a supplication to the Almighty, you are at fault.

“ Here is an example which is very simple and will explain my thought. Orestes, charged by the Greeks with obtaining from Pyrrhus the death of Astyanax, whose resentment might one day prove fatal to Greece and to Pyrrhus himself, said to the King of Epirus :

“ ‘ At last let the desire of all the Greeks be satisfied,  
Gratify their revenge and secure your own life.’ ”

It would be wrong in an oratorical sense to pronounce the last line in the same tone as the first ; the first line is a demand, a request ; the second a counsel, a warning ; you do not make a request with the same accent that you give advice. Often this study, well conducted, will discover the words in which to give the true force of the idea, and which should in consequence receive the emphasis and coloring of the intonation.

“ Sometimes, even among the best authors, the oratorical sense of a phrase may be the subject of doubt, and it is an exercise at once interesting and instructive to arouse among beginners a discussion upon the subject.

“ In one word, delivery is to be governed by the sense. Theory in the study of speaking well does not go farther than this, and seeks only to define the sense. The

remainder of the study will be entered upon by the pupil himself with advice from his instructors and his friends."

#### SEC. 28. *Elocution.*

We would treat this theme more as a matter of delivery than as a special method of preaching, which comes under Homiletics proper, and which has already been considered. Some writers object to considering "elocution," or the delivery of a discourse, as a legitimate part of rhetoric, inasmuch as the mode of communicating thought or truth is not the essential thing in rhetoric, but rather the actual communicating of thought itself. It is also held that elocution is not a constituent part of rhetoric, because there are ways of communicating thought other than by the voice ; because we have a complete product of art when the thought is embodied in language ; and because, as a practical matter, in teaching the two, it is better to keep them apart.<sup>1</sup> But we think, nevertheless, that anything which enables us to communicate truth, and to communicate it effectively, comes legitimately under the art of rhetoric. The difference is, at least, practically, slight. For aught we can see, elocution has just as much right to be considered a part of rhetoric as has style of composition ; for both contribute to the effective communication of truth. At all events, if elocution is not in the strictest sense an essential part of rhetoric, yet it has a close relation to it ; and if rhetoric be confined, as we have limited it in our definition, to the art of spoken public discourse, it has a vital relation to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Day's " Art of Discourse," pp. 14, 15.



To preach forcibly calls out not only what Cicero designates as "the eloquence of the body," but the intellectual energies, the eloquence of the mind. And it is by no means a small thing, or a hastily-won accomplishment, to acquire the art of a good delivery. It requires great pains and study; for it is not a mechanical art, but it calls in play the taste, the judgment, the moral and emotional nature, and the reasoning powers. Talma, the tragedian, used to say that thinking was the great part of his art.

**The deepest  
sources of  
good delivery  
intellectual  
and moral.**

Since speech comes from the inmost parts of the intellectual and moral nature, and is the distinguishing property of a rational creature, the true source of eloquent speaking may be considered to be eloquent thought. One half of delivery, and not the least important half, is almost a purely intellectual exercise. For a good and full treatment of this part of the subject, laying open what are the deepest sources of power in delivering that are to be found in thought and feeling, in the nature and states of the soul, and which it is impossible to treat in the short space devoted to this subject, we would refer our readers to the excellent work on Elocution, by Professor J. H. McIlvaine, who has developed this idea in a skillful manner.

The best delivery is that which comes from the best thought and the most earnest feeling, and one cannot disconnect these from delivery without making elocution an artificial thing, hardly worth cultivating; an outside accomplishment of the play-actor, though even the best actor cannot be made in this way. The close connection between thought and language, between meaning and emphasis, between earnest belief and effective delivery, between emotion and its true yet varied modes of expres-

sion, the wonderful symbolism of feeling and passion, all these prove how profound and subjective are the sources of power in delivery.

The author just referred to above quotes an interesting remark by Ole Bull, the violinist, as going to illustrate by an analogy in another art the relations of the speaker to his audience and how, through his voice as an instrument, he seizes the audience with his mind. When the artist by his performance had melted a great audience to tears, he said, speaking of this, "Do you know that I do not produce these effects by the mere sounds of my violin? I produce them by the direct action of my mind upon the minds of the audience. I employ the tones of the instrument simply for the purpose of opening the channels through which I myself act upon their hearts." We can hardly make too much of this realization of direct address to the audience, of a conscious determination to grasp their minds with his mind, as having relation to the orator's power of delivery. The preacher should not deliver a monologue, but should always feel that he is speaking to others—that he has an audience—that he is to move and affect it. Nor can we overestimate the influence in speaking of the qualities of the will, of the imagination, and of the sympathies; and it might be added that if "eloquence is the joint product of the mental action of the speaker and the audience," the qualities just mentioned have a far freer and more forcible play in extemporaneous speaking than in any other kind. But that the mental powers come largely into delivery, if indeed it be not mere sound and fury signifying nothing, cannot be denied. Who, indeed, can doubt but that, while very intellectual men are not always good speakers, yet that mind has a vast deal to do with good

delivery ; and that the highest results of good speaking, of true eloquence, cannot be reached without the presence and action of corresponding qualities of mind.

Next to the intellectual and moral sources of power in delivery are those which are more purely physical. These comprise the proper vital and bodily conditions of the speaker, the state of the healthful activity of all his powers of sensibility, passion, physical energy, and the maintaining and training of these, so that the orator, or preacher, always, or as a general rule, may speak at his best, in his best mood, to the best advantage, and with the highest and most vigorous use of all his faculties. The orator is the highest idea of the man, physical and intellectual. It is the good working order of these vital forces that inspires the brain with activity and gives animation and power to all that is spoken. This is the fire under the machinery. This is the earthly or animal base, so to speak, of the higher operations of the soul—and a very important foundation it is ; for a speaker of feeble vitality may have good thoughts, but he will most likely fail to impress them upon others. A man may have all the truth in the world, but he must learn, in addition, to give an effective utterance to the truth which he has.

**Vital and  
physical  
qualities.**

Then there is a still deeper idea than all this that we have heretofore noticed, in the delivery of a sermon, or in true preaching, as distinguished from every other form of discourse, in its connection with spiritual instrumentalities, and viewed as a medium of communicating divine truth. What was Whitefield's preaching, looked at as an instrument of the conversion of men, without his peculiar power of delivery ? In such a delivery the Holy Spirit has the chief controlling influence ; the highest activities of the

**Spiritual  
qualities.**

spiritual as well as intellectual life are engaged in it ; and the whole man is raised and transformed into an instrument of God's truth.

Whately is inclined to the view that the study of elocution renders the speaker artificial ; but preachers do

Whately's  
view of  
elocution.

not usually err from carrying the art of elocution to an undue extent, but err rather from a careless and unimpressive manner.

Of course, exclusive attention should not be given to the delivery, and in the act of speaking, elocution should be forgotten ; but this is not saying that much may not be done in private to produce an unconsciously noble delivery. The soldier forgets his drill in action, but his drill makes him a better soldier.

The study of elocution has its good effects upon style. One will be more careful to adapt his style to the purposes

Good effect  
of the study  
of elocution  
on style.

of speech—to make it easy, strong, and flowing. What, in many respects, could be a better spoken style for popular influence than Daniel Webster's ? and that was gained

by speaking—by speaking to courts, to senates, to great audiences of human beings, for immediate effect and conviction. It was the fruit of his contact and contest with other minds on public occasions. His style became fitted to his delivery. The actual delivery of his thoughts improved and vitalized his style. And the benefits of a good delivery upon an audience are great ; by his look, tone, gesture, a speaker infuses himself into his hearers' minds, and makes them for the time think and feel as he does. Robert Hall, it is said, had the art, not only of communicating what he said, but of communicating *himself*, to his audience. It was the whole man speaking. That is true eloquence. How many preachers have been intellectual men and weighty



thinkers, who never could thus communicate themselves or their thoughts to other minds !

The delivery of a public discourse implies especially four things : Enunciation, Pronunciation, Emphasis, and Action.

1. Enunciation. This has regard to the fulness and perfectness of vocal sound in speaking, and it includes the whole matter of the management and training of the voice—a subject of no little **Enunciation and the voice.** importance to the preacher. There are few voices—particularly if they belong to men whom God has called to be the heralds of his truth—so faulty and so weak by nature that they may not be made, by a persevering and intelligent training, effective, and, it may be, powerful. One must set to work and make a voice if he have it not. It is well, therefore, to acquaint one's self thoroughly with the physiology of the organs of the voice, which are so delicate, complicated, and wonderful. If a musician should perfectly know his instrument, and should exercise care in preserving the vigor and purity of its tone, so that it may be ready to give forth the mightiest and the most delicate tones, how much more should the speaker understand and guard his more exquisite instrument ! The first simple, common-sense axiom in regard to the voice is, that it depends for its strength and clearness upon a general sound state of health. A man in bad health will show it in his voice, in its feebleness or harshness ; for in ill health, the muscular system, upon which the voice depends, is relaxed ; and a man with a cracked voice is little better than a cracked bell or a cracked musical instrument. The preacher should strive to maintain a good, vigorous tone of health, for the purpose of maintaining a good vocal tone. He should regard his body as an in-

strument in God's hands to proclaim his word ; it should be kept strong and pure, as the medium of divine inspiration and instruction. The " Baptist's " living in the free solitudes of nature and feeding upon locusts and wild honey may have had something to do in making that strong " voice " of one crying in the wilderness " Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Cicero said, " For the effectiveness and glory of delivery, the voice, doubtless, holds the first place." He had great trouble with his own voice, and took unwearied pains with it. " At the age of seven and twenty, he had, owing to the vehemence of his oratory and great constitutional weakness, so injured his voice that he was strongly advised by his physicians and nearest friends, to abandon his profession. He refused. He determined to see whether, by bringing his voice down to a lower and more moderate key, he might not retain his health, and lose none of his effectiveness as a speaker. For this purpose he went to Greece, placed himself under the care, first of Atticus, then of Demetrius the Syrian ; and after making a circuit round all Asia, in company with the most celebrated orators and rhetoricians, he returned at the end of two years, quite another man. His way of speaking seemed to have grown cool, and his voice was rendered much easier to himself and much sweeter to the audience." <sup>1</sup>

McIlvaine, in his work on " Elocution," gives some practical advice to preachers in the use of the voice as regards health. " A full and healthy action of the vital forces will commonly, with due attention to regimen, enable the speaker to command the favorable mood for each occasion of speaking. A full vitality imparts to the

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<sup>1</sup> Moore's " Thoughts on Preaching," p. 183.

voice its most effective qualities and powers, and a certain fulness and vivacity to the speaking ; the want of it enfeebles the delivery in a corresponding manner. For the reason that clergymen are compelled to speak twice or three times on Sunday, they ought never to leave the study later than at noon on Saturday. The remainder of the day should be devoted to rest, and exercise in the open air, and the night to sound and refreshing sleep. In like manner, the intervals between the Sunday services should be devoted to rest. By such adequate refreshment and renovation of the vital forces, the preacher may make the latter services as animated and interesting as the former; which is the more desirable in order to overcome the increasing temptation of church-goers to stay at home in the afternoon. For whatsoever is worthy of the name of preaching requires the exercise of the whole vital force of a sound and healthy man. To preach the gospel takes all there is or can ever be in any man."

A second plain axiom in regard to the voice is, that one should speak upon a full inhalation of air. The chest or the lungs is the seat of vocal power. One should be careful, in speaking, that the reservoir of air in the chest is never exhausted ; he should take air in, as well as force it out ; and a clear, full, and, at the same time, delicate, enunciation comes from having air enough, and using all the air inhaled, " speaking with the whole of ourselves, and not merely with the throat and lips." Upon this full column of air in the chest the voice should ring freely in the head, as in the top of a dome, not, however, confining it to the chest, but using the chest-voice only as a basis ; for it is a false rule not to employ the head (vocally) in speaking. It is the concavity of the mouth and head which gives the resonant and sonorous quality to the voice—a quality lamentably

wanting in some of our American speakers. Cicero says that one should be careful to take a respiration long enough, that he may not fail to have sufficient breath to finish what he has to say ; and a sentence should not be so long that it cannot be easily and naturally spoken. The sound given by the instrument should not exceed its capacities. One should not, says Coquerel, enter into a contest with his throat, he will surely be worsted. Talma used to say of his actors, " They know how to declaim, but they do not know how to respire."

Still another suggestion in regard to the voice and the enunciation is, that one should strive for a natural tone. " The voice is first to be formed. It is to be strengthened by an increased capacity of the lungs, and an acquired, strong, respiratory action. Its thorough discipline must be mastered, from the lightest whisper to the loudest shouting ; not with a view to actual use, but for securing a command over every degree of force and pliancy. Even in a few weeks a stentorian power can be imparted to a comparatively weak voice."<sup>1</sup> But, notwithstanding all that may be done to discipline and train the voice, it should still be a natural voice ; for an artificial voice, let it be never so good, is less effective than a natural one ; it unpleasantly suggests something artificial in the man or in his thoughts. Every person has his own natural pitch of voice, one that is nicely adapted to his mind and temperament. Let him not strive to change this divine arrangement, and take up another man's instrument. Let him speak with his own voice, and not with that of some other preacher or speaker, whom he has selected as a model. Above all, let him not speak like an old man while he is still a young man ; we wish to hear the fresh,

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<sup>1</sup> Frobisher's " Voice and Action," p. 19.



high, varied tones of youth in the voice of a young man. Therefore, as we have before suggested, let not even head-tones be avoided—the highest radical tones—if one is only mindful to have a chest-tone as a basis. Let the voice play freely and naturally up and down, like a musical instrument. This is agreeable to hear, and it relieves the speaker. It is well to speak in the pitch that one would use in common conversation, only clearer and fuller; and yet some speakers assume a tone which is entirely unnatural—a declamatory tone, or a solemn tone, or a “holy tone;” as if preaching was anything else than talking loud enough for a large audience to hear distinctly. “Placing himself, then, in the position of an authorized teacher, and theoretically speaking his own words, he must adopt a tone and manner corresponding to his position. His tone must be his conversational tone, and his manner (reverential as to the Deity, colloquial as to the congregation) his natural manner, varied, indeed, according to the subject, but still so really his own that any listening friend would recognize him to be the speaker by his tone and manner alone.”<sup>1</sup> We may learn something from Roman Catholic methods. “A novice among the Jesuits, no matter what he may have been previously—canon, vicar, or bishop—must attend a reading-class three or four times a week. There he is made to read like a child, is taught to articulate and to accentuate, and every now and then is stopped, when those present are called upon to point out the merits and defects of his reading. Nor is this all. Every Monday during his noviciate, often extending over several years, he has to recite the *formula of the tones*, as it is called—a short discourse, comprising all the tones ordinarily used

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<sup>1</sup> Gould's “Good English,” p. 181.

in oratorical composition ; such as the tone of persuasion, of menace, of kindness, of anger, of mercy, of prayer, etc. ; the preacher being obliged to remain in the pulpit after such exercise to hear such criticisms as an invited audience may choose to pass upon his performance." <sup>1</sup>

Every public speaker should, as the least he can do, endeavor to remedy or improve the imperfections of his own voice. If he has a feeble voice, let him strive to give it more fulness ; if he has a thick and guttural voice, let him aim at greater clearness and refinement of tone ; if he has a rasping, harsh voice, let him endeavor to soften and sweeten it, to take off its wire-edge ; but with all this, let him accept the voice God has given him, and use it, and not another man's ; and, strange as it may sound, so many are the faults which one is apt to fall into by education, that it requires great study and labor to speak naturally.

As a last suggestion, one should strive for a pure tone ; for this, more than anything else, indicates the cultivated speaker. A pure tone is that which is free from all false tones. A false tone, as distinguished from a pure tone, arises from some imperfect respiration, or false carriage of the voice, as, for instance, a pectoral tone, which comes from an imperfect use of the lungs. Those who have the misfortune to be consumptive, or those who have weak lungs, are apt to have the pectoral tone. Fuller and more vigorous respiration is needed for them. The voice, if possible, should be lifted out of, or, at least, not be suffered to lie buried in, the sepulchre of the chest, where it rumbles in hollow tones. A preacher should stand erect, so that all the organs of speech can have free

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<sup>1</sup> " The Clergy and the Pulpit," by M. l'Abbé Mullois, C. x. p. 243.

play. He should not be a lecturer, but a preacher ; and it is here that the *extempore* speaker has an immense advantage. The whole apparatus of the vocal organs is to be employed in producing a clear, pure tone ; and a speaker should find out by practice, and by the criticism of friends, where his defect lies, or in what one imperfectly used organ ; and thus he may effectually cure a natural faultiness of voice, and, by persistent effort, bring up even a weak voice to great power and efficiency.

We would add that clearness, rather than extreme loudness, is best suited for the pulpit-voice—that full, audible, manly, even, flowing enunciation on which one can easily weave all characters and varieties of tone, from the most delicate to the most vehement. Quintilian finely remarks, “ That delivery is elegant which is supported by a voice that is easy, powerful, sweet, well sustained, clear, pure, that cuts the air and penetrates the ear ; for there is a kind of voice naturally qualified to make itself heard, not by its strength, but by a peculiar excellence of tone—a voice which is obedient to the will of the speaker, susceptible of every variety of sound and inflection that can be required, and possessed of all the notes of a musical instrument ; and to maintain it there should be strength of lungs, and breath that can be steadily prolonged, and is not likely to sink under labor. Neither the lowest musical tone, nor the highest, is proper for oratory ; for the lowest, which is far from being clear, and is too full, can make no impression on the minds of an audience ; and the highest, which is very sharp, rising above the natural pitch, is not susceptible of inflection from pronunciation, nor can it endure to be kept long on the stretch ; for the voice is like the string of an instrument : the more relaxed it is, the graver and fuller its tone ; the more it is stretched, the more thin

and sharp is its sound. Thus a voice in the lowest key wants force ; in the highest, is in danger of being cracked. We must therefore cultivate the middle tones, which may be raised when we speak with vehemence, and lowered when we deliver ourselves with gentleness.”<sup>1</sup>

In reading the Scriptures, the voice should, as a general rule, move upon a monotone, but without becoming monotonous ; it should rise and fall easily, according to the sense. There should be something of the same easy variety in the tone that there is in common conversation.

The Bible does not require to be emphasized and aided by so great a variety of tones as other books, because it is not only, as a general rule, simple and plain, but it has the dignity and authority of a divine teaching. Practice is required in the proper use of cadence, and there are sublime passages of the New Testament which should be read with something of a swell in the voice ; so also should many of the poetical and grand passages of the Old Testament. The prayer and the reading of the hymns require the preacher to vary his tone, in order to mark the elevation of thought and feeling ; though this may be easily overdone, as in the case of the poet’s divine, who

“ gives to prayer  
The adagio and andante it demands.”

The words “ Give attention to reading ” might be addressed in their most literal sense to the preacher ; for reading the Scriptures has been rightly called “ a continuous commentary of the text.”

There is no instrument more capable of cultivation than the human voice ; no instrument that equals it in

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<sup>1</sup> “ Instit.,” B. xi. c. iii. secs. 40, 41, 42.



beauty, richness, scope, and power ; its thunder tones rouse and roll through the inmost depths of the conscience ; its flute-like notes fill the mind with harmonious visions of happiness and peace ; its pathos touches the springs of the heart, and makes wicked men feel like children, and weep like children over their wrong-doings.

The second element of delivery, Pronunciation, is simply to utter articulately, or to give, with clear precision, to every vocal element, **Pronunciation.** whether vowel or consonant, its proper articulate sound. This distinguishes an educated and refined from a slovenly and uncultivated pronunciation.

“ When a word is properly articulated and properly accented, it is rightly pronounced. Articulation (which is the formation and jointing together into syllables of the elementary sounds of speech) is, however, the more fundamental and controlling element. The formation of the elementary sounds, and of syllables, is obviously the most essential element in the formation of words. Pronunciation ought not to be conformed to the symbolization, or to the spelling of words, as such attempts reverse the original method by which language was reduced to writing. Speech is always in a process of change. The life of a language always follows the sound, not the symbol. A correct and elegant pronunciation is an element of power in delivery which can hardly be overestimated.”<sup>1</sup>

Emphasis, when rightly given, is also a great beauty in speaking. It does not consist in mere loudness, but rather in an indescribable variety of tones and modulations. It is thought, for exam- **Emphasis.** ple, by some preachers, that it is absolutely necessary to

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<sup>1</sup> McIlvaine's "Elocution," p. 239.

pronounce terrible words in a terrible manner, in loud and startling tones of voice ; but it is generally more emphatic and solemnly impressive when the feeling of awe which such words should inspire leads us to sink the voice, though without softening or weakening it.

“ Emphasis (from *εμφαινω* to show, to express in a vivid, forcible manner) depends upon force and quality of voice, time, pitch, and inflection. It is relative, that is to say, the degree of prominence which is given to words or phrases is to be determined by the connection in which they stand, and by the occasion or circumstances of the delivery. Emphasis is a substantive element of language itself, since by varying it the meaning of any combination of words may be wholly changed. Great care should be taken to guard against too frequent emphasis, and loading the delivery with emphasis.”

Good emphasis is a great beauty in delivery ; it atones for many faults.

“ Correct accent is indispensable to spirited, tasteful, and intelligent reading and speaking ; every accented word becomes the seat of life in utterance. A feeble and inexpressive utterance kills the thoughts of the speaker.”<sup>1</sup>

The severest argument may be lighted up by a discriminating emphasis, just as a painter, when he has almost finished his picture, puts in, here and there, what he calls the “ lights ;” and so nature, if one observes a landscape, always distributes her lights—not in masses, but in points.

Whately decries the artificial study of emphasis. He says, “ Fill your mind with the matter ; be inspired by it ; be sincerely desirous of imparting it to your hearers ; and then your emphasis will take care of itself.” That

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<sup>1</sup> Vandenhoff's “ Clerical Assistant.”

is good advice as far as it goes. But how many good and zealous ministers are very ineffective preachers! It would seem to be better to fill one's mind with his sermon, and with the desire to impart the truth it contains, and then study it to know how this may best be done. There should be a study of emphasis if for no other reason than to avoid having too much emphasis, as is the case with some preachers, which makes a ranting style, that wearies both hearer and speaker; for violence in elocution is not force.

Action is natural to man in speaking. The child gestures when he talks, and it is well to observe the gestures of children, and to note their freedom, grace, and effectiveness; for well-timed and

**Action.**

natural gesture adds greatly to the power of speech. There is, however, a difference of opinion in regard to the propriety of much or little action, and of little or no action, in the pulpit. Audiences themselves differ here. Some speakers who enchain their audiences while standing stiff as poles—enchain them by their thoughts—would be considered dull preachers by other audiences, who like to see the dust fly from the cushion. There is an oaken desk shown at Eisenach, in Germany, which Luther broke with his fist in preaching.

Notwithstanding this difference of opinion, and notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's dictum that "action can have no effect on reasonable minds, sir," there can be no doubt that some gesture, some timely and animated action, is good for the preacher. "Whitefield's vehemence was excessive. A poor man said he preached like a lion. Sometimes he stamped, sometimes he wept, sometimes he stopped exhausted by emotion, and appeared as if he were about to expire. He usually vomited after the exertion of the day, and often brought up blood. Yet this

was the man whom the cold and sceptical Franklin would travel twenty miles to hear.”<sup>1</sup> European and Oriental nations gesture constantly, both in conversation and public speaking ; and we have no doubt that Demosthenes and the great orators of antiquity used much, and at times vehement, gesture.

The simple rule in gesture would seem to be, that while it should be free and natural, like a child's, it should not be carried to an excess ; that is worse than no action at all ; none at all is at least safe, if not eloquent. There should be, in fact, a certain thoughtful restraint in gesture, and just enough of art to avoid awkward, improper, and misplaced action.

“ Emotion rather than thought is the immediate cause of gesture ; and gesture corresponds to the nature of the emotion, rather than of the thought. Too much gesture, though significant and appropriate, enfeebles its power of expression ; otherwise, too much is better than too little. The countenance should correspond to the sentiments embodied in the words, though the speaker should be put on his guard against indiscriminate smiling and frowning. The eye is the chief feature in expression, and thus the audience should see the speaker's eye. ‘ *In ore sunt omnia.*’ The expression of the hands is only inferior to that of the countenance. The hand must show that the speaker is all alive, even to his fingernails.”<sup>2</sup>

The action of the hand was regarded by the ancients as so significant that the whole art of delivery was named by the Greeks *Chironomia*, meaning the law of physical expression beyond thought itself—“ the power of utter-

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<sup>1</sup> “ British Quarterly,” April, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> McIlvaine's “ Elocution,” p. 393.



ance through all the organs of language in the body, the power of speaking what we think not only by vocal sounds, but also by expressive motions of grace and strength." The numberless false motions of the hand in speaking, from sawing the air like the sails of a windmill to punching it like poking a grate, could not readily be described, while a little thoughtful training would reduce these wild and meaningless gesticulations to a noble and expressive action, giving indescribable effect to speech.

Some men incline by temperament to a great deal of action in speaking ; let them not wholly restrain it, for then they would be unnatural ; but let them be careful that the action be fit, and subordinate to the thought. Other men incline to little or no gesture : let them be careful not to become excessive in their stiff monotony. It is best, perhaps, for a young preacher to gesture as little as possible, until he gets used to preaching, and feels free to be himself in the pulpit. Audiences are involuntarily on the watch to discover the evidences of art in the sermon, and in the style of delivery, of a young preacher. When they see the rhetorical education in him, he ceases to impress them with what he is saying. Audiences ought to be disappointed here. There should be no mannerism of action to divert attention from the plain message of God which the young preacher is delivering.

All gestures should be free and flowing, not cramped and confined. There should be nothing small, fastidious, and mincing in gesture, since the idea of man's greatness should be before us in the orator. Cicero commends, in oratory, "a bold and manly action of body, not learned from the theatre and the player, but from the camp, or even from the palæstra."<sup>1</sup> There is, indeed, much in

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<sup>1</sup> "De Oratore," B. iii. s. 59.

the ancient idea of the "free elbow." Page, the artist, sagaciously remarks, that the superiority of ancient sculpture over modern consists chiefly in its bold angles ; and he gives as an illustration the attitude of one of the sons of Niobe, stretching his widely-extended arms to heaven. Pulpits should be made to admit of this large and free action. They should be so made that nearly the whole of the preacher's form can be seen ; for true gesture is the speaking of the whole man, of all his limbs, and even of his feet ; and perhaps the good time will come when the pulpit, with a desk for notes, will be abolished altogether, and the preacher will stand up in his simple manhood, with nothing adventitious about him, and speak the word with naturalness, spontaneity, and freedom fresh from the heart. How great are the advantages of a good delivery! "I do not fear to affirm," says Quintilian, "that a mediocre discourse, sustained by the prestige of a good delivery, shall have more weight than the most beautiful discourse without such aid, "*Equidem vel mediocrem orationem commendatam viribus actiones, affirmaverim plus habituram esse mementi, quam optimam eadem illa destitutam.*"<sup>1</sup>

*Minima auxilia ne spernamus.* Nothing is too small, nothing too trifling, which helps us to become better preachers. In the delivery of a discourse on so solemn a theme as that of divine truth, we should at least strive to avoid anything which will mar the effect of the sacred message—any inexcusable carelessness of speaking, awkwardness of manner, harshness of voice, flippancy of tone, or wearisomeness of monotony. The delivery should be natural, affectionate, and free. Nothing can make up for want of life, of animation. The manuscript

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<sup>1</sup> "Instit.," B. xi. c. iii. s. 2.

is a curse if it deadens and dulls delivery. "There should be the *vividus vultus, vividi oculi, vivida manus, denique omnia vivida* that are portrayed as characteristic of Luther's preaching." The delivery should have not only manly dignity and simplicity, but cheerful variety, and, above all, noble action, which may be the medium of the divine energy. To quote from an admirable essay of Dr. Skinner (Am. Pres. and Theol. Rev., January, 1865), "Action, which is more than knowledge, needs aids for itself. In elocutionary action, as well as in thinking and writing, the preacher, however qualified by self-culture, can attain to no degree of spirituality by merely natural effort. If the activity of a preacher in speaking—the eloquence of the body—be indeed spiritual, it is doubtless a higher exercise of the spiritual life than either of its other exercises in the business of preaching. It must needs be so, if it be answerable in all respects to the unique and mysterious exigencies of such a work as delivering appropriately the inspired word of God, as a vehicle and representative of the Holy Spirit. Apart from a very special operation of the Spirit himself, who is sufficient for the just performance of this work? Spiritual things, expressing themselves fitly in spiritual modulations of the voice, spiritual looks, spiritual attitudes, the supernatural exerting itself in and through these bodily signs of thought and feeling—think of one's having in himself a sufficiency for this! The apostles, with all their gifts for other uses, had it not; nay, even our Lord's spirituality of mind and knowledge, added to the perfectly natural use of the human powers, did not qualify him adequately for the business of dispensing the word, independently of the continued co-agency of the Spirit in this specific business; even he delivered his dis-

courses under the anointing and in the power of the Spirit of God" (Luke 4 : 18 ; 21 : 14).

As a result of this reasoning, the conclusion is drawn that "in all preliminary work in reference to actual delivery, the preacher must abide in communion with the Holy Spirit."



## SECOND DIVISION.

### INVENTION.

#### SEC. 29. *Definition and Sources of Invention.*

Rhetoric, strictly considered, is divided into two principal parts, Invention and Style, or the matter and manner of a discourse ; and we shall now proceed to treat of these topics, which form the concluding and more specific portion of the discussion of rhetoric applied to preaching.

Invention may be defined to be the art of supplying and of methodizing the subject-matter of a discourse.

Its primary idea is, to discover, bring together, or supply the requisite material of thought, from whatever source ; its subordinate idea, and one legitimately connected with it as far as the proper uses of rhetoric are concerned, is the right methodizing or arrangement of this material.

**Definition of  
invention.**

We will consider, briefly, the sources of invention, and the qualities of the true subject.

#### I. The sources of invention.

(a.) Original power of thought. This belongs to the mind, as mind ; but it may be indefinitely increased through discipline and culture, since the more this original faculty of thought is trained, the stronger and richer it grows in invention, the greater its command of the sources and materials of thought. There are, it is true, vast dif-

**Sources of  
invention.**

ferences in native mental power and fertility, in the primitive depth of the mental soil ; but where there is native power of thought a thorough and philosophical education serves to develop it, that it may bear more fruit of invention. Vinet says ("Homiletics," p. 53), "But the most certain means of invention, as to the subject of discourse, is a truly philosophical culture."<sup>1</sup> In sermon-writing the well-disciplined mind, the mind trained to think, has a confident vigor in discovering and handling a subject which the untrained mind cannot have. A thoughtful mind, well disciplined, will be continually quarrying out for itself new subject-matter, since thought itself is, after all, the main principle and source of good writing.

(b.) Acquired knowledge. Out of nothing, nothing can be invented. There must first be the material for thought to work upon, and from which to draw forth the subject-matter of discourse before the writer or orator has any function. That material is truth as it lies in its elemental conditions in nature and the moral universe, rewarding the sincere seeker but eluding the final analysis. No one but God can create simple or original truth ; yet man may lay hold of truth and use the truth, while he cannot circumscribe or exhaust it. The broader the dominion of truth which the orator thus commands, the more of it he has actually made his own, the richer his sources of invention, and the wider his power and influence.

We do not like to see barrenness in any writer, but in writing a sermon especially one should draw upon a full mind ; he should be able to look down upon a subject in all its parts and relations, and should feel that his great

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<sup>1</sup> See also Quintilian's "Instit.," B. i. c. xix.

embarrassment consists in coming at the specific theme of discourse, in defining, selecting, and arranging his material, rather than in being obliged to gather together matter enough to eke out a discourse. It is better not to attempt to write upon a subject than to write with a small and imperfect knowledge of it, which sometimes one may be forced to do, although this is not the way to nourish a rich invention. And this acquired knowledge, that is to be employed in invention, is not the gathering together of a crude, undigested mass of knowledge ; but it requires an act of the mind to possess itself of this knowledge, to assimilate truth to the nourishment of the thinking power, to make it fit for use. This requires reflection—that profound meditation upon divine truth, without which there can be no rich, original preaching. It is not merely the preaching of truth, but our own personal perception or apprehension of truth, the ripe fruitage of our own patient thinking upon truth, that is needed.

The great source of the preacher's acquired knowledge is the word of God ; and he who studies this word daily, who digs in this field, who is constantly pursuing original investigations in this still fresh and fruitful soil, will never be at a loss for subjects of sermons. The word of God is, and will always be, the main subject-matter of preaching. It should be preached in its unity—that is, as one product of one divine author through many minds ; in its variety, not merely for example in its doctrinal, but also its ethical aspects, and not merely as the law, but also, and above all, as the gospel ; in its integrity, without intentionally slurring over any portion ; and in its right order or proportion of parts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See "Moore on Preaching."

The preacher's invention is shown in bringing into use, and in arranging judiciously, his rich scriptural materials. It is well that there is beginning to be a call for biblical preaching ; this will immensely increase the variety of the material of preaching and the supply of the inventive faculty. The last review, the last new work on theology, the last published volume of essays or sermons, while suggestive, cannot afford preachers their source of supply ; for all such materials are adventitious ; they are not the *spring*, but only a reservoir whose waters soon dry up. The older Puritan preachers dwelt continually in the word and spirit of God, and thus they were fresh and original, sometimes startlingly bold, but profound in a spiritual sense, even if labored and incorrect in form. They preached, it is true, scholastically ; but in substance and spirit they drew their main material from the Scriptures. There is an evangelic life in what they say, which must have seemed, at the time, like a direct prophecy, or a speaking of God's spirit through their minds to men.

(c.) The process of reasoning. As meditation upon truth arouses the inventive faculty, the more logical power of definition, analysis, and comparison, gradually leads invention to settle down upon some definite result of thought, some distinct and comprehensive subject ; it conducts to the apprehension of those elements or principles of truth which lie behind all knowledge. What do we mean by depth as opposed to superficiality of mind, or of invention ? Let us answer in the words of another, " Depth consists in tracing any number of particular effects to a general principle, or in distinguishing an unknown cause from the individual and varying circumstances with which it is implicated, and under which it lurks unsuspected. It is in fact resolving



the concrete into the abstract. Now this is a task of difficulty, not only because the abstract naturally merges in the concrete, and we do not well know how to set about separating what is cemented together in a single object, and presented under a common aspect ; but being scattered over a larger surface, and collected from a number of undefined sources, there must be a strong feeling of its weight and pressure in order to detach it from the object and bind it into a principle.”<sup>1</sup> Many preachers’ minds are sufficiently fertile in subjects for sermons, but, lacking this habit of philosophic thinking, the cultivated analytic power, they fail to look the subject through, or to come at the real subject at all. They are thus led also to superficiality in the treatment of subjects, and are rich only in the mere discovery of novel themes.

### SEC. 30. *Qualities of the True Subject.*

1. It should possess unity of subject and object. We have spoken already of unity of form in an æsthetic point of view ; but the very matter and essence of a discourse should be one. This forms its life ; and a discourse can have, like a man, but one life, not two or more. We naturally say, “ the subject of this discourse is so and so.” If we should say, “ The subjects of this discourse are so and so,” would our hearers expect to be persuaded or impelled to any particular duty? A sermon, above all, should have but one foundation theme, though capable, it may be, of many different aspects and divisions ; for a sermon is not a mere work of art ; it is infinitely more : it is a practical work directed to a moral end, calculated to act impressively upon the will and affections of the

Unity  
of subject  
and object.

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<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt’s “ Plain Speaker.”

hearer ; it should have, therefore, but one subject, and should aim at one impression, or it loses its moral power.

The sermon may sometimes treat of complex truths ; but these should be comprehended in some broader truth, and all the thoughts should be bound together into one synthetic whole. The discourse delivered by the preacher has something to accomplish ; it is directed to a certain end ; it is to carry a certain point ; it has an earnest mission ; it does not talk about truth, but it preaches the truth which is fitted to convert men's souls ; therefore there should be not only unity of subject—unity in the very substance of the thought—but unity of object, unity of aim. There may be a wide subject, but there should be a narrower object toward which it is directed and is made to converge. According to Vinet, in order to have unity in a sermon, it must be reducible to a doctrinal proposition, which is readily transformed into a practical proposition ; and every sermon, even an expository one, should partake more or less of this unity of subject and object, this oneness of substance and aim. It is true that the sermons of Augustine, and of the early fathers of the Church, seem to go upon the principle of imparting as much truth as possible at the time, without any marked attempt at unity, and this was better suited to an earlier and less exactly thoughtful age ; but, as a general principle, at all times and under all circumstances, the laws of the mind teach us that we cannot, in speaking for the purpose of persuasion, attain to any object, or accomplish any definite end, unless we keep that object in view and steadily pursue it. We should not only, therefore, have a theme, but we should clearly apprehend it in all its bearings, so that while following it out, while discussing subordinate and related subjects, while pursuing definite and individual methods of treatment, we

should not forget either the one main subject or the one main object of our discourse ; and these two, in a certain sense, should be one.

2. It should have originality. The term "invention" presupposes this : for to invent, one must, in some true sense, originate. Whatever one produces should be the genuine product of his own **Originality.** thinking—not that he may not receive help from other sources, but his intellectual products should be the honest fruit of his own brain. This is the happiness and reward of literary labor, and it loses its stimulus and pleasurable excitement where there is not this consciousness of independent, and, in a true sense, original invention ; and if this is true of any species of literary composition or public discourse, it is true of the sermon. Let us ask *in what way true originality is violated.* We would say negatively—not in using old truths ; for no one can make a new truth. Even the discovery of a new truth seems to be reserved for the few minds on which epochs turn, though, indeed, there is no monopoly here. The truths of the Bible, above all other truths, are common property to all preachers and men. Goethe says that originality does not consist in saying new things, but in treating old things in a new way. Again, not in using old arguments or proofs. The old arguments are generally the best ; they are the results of the best thinking of the best minds ; they have become the property of all. The interests of truth itself demand that it should not lose the support of the best arguments, the old and well-tried proofs, and lean upon weaker proofs merely because they are new. Yet again, not in taking subjects that have been preached upon by others. One should not be fastidious in this. The most important subjects will be those most preached upon. And there *are* certain sub-

jects, which not to preach upon would be a clear failure of duty ; and, obviously, no one has an exclusive right of property in the truths and subjects of the Bible. There are some peculiarly original forms in which even homiletical subjects have been stated, which it would be absurd and wrong for a preacher to repeat, inasmuch as they are not his own. Thus Dr. Bushnell's sermon upon " Every man's life a plan of God," upon the text in Isaiah 45 : 5, " I have girded thee, though thou hast not known me," is stamped, in the very subject of it, with an original ownership. It is perilous to originality to read a vigorous sermon like this beforehand, if we intend to preach upon the same text. We should at least wait until we escape as it were from the mastering force of such a sermon, and until our own minds can work freely and independently upon the theme.

True originality of invention may be violated, positively, by employing the thoughts, words, and method of another, without, in some way, giving due credit for it. The violation consists not in using another's thoughts, or those which bear the unmistakable stamp of ownership, but in not candidly acknowledging their source. One must use the result of others' thinking to a certain extent, for he cannot think all things *de origine*, and he is the heir of ages of thought ; he may sometimes even unconsciously employ ideas and trains of thought which belong peculiarly to another mind, whose source he has forgotten, and which he uses unwittingly as his own ; there may be striking coincidences in his own thinking and that of another man's ; and does it not sometimes happen to every thinking man that when he has earnestly thought out an idea, or an illustration, or an argument, when he is morally certain that it is his own, that in the next book he reads per-



haps, with an astonishment that brings the blood to his face, he sees the same thought, or almost the same collocation of words and phrases which he had wrought out by his independent thinking. In an age like this, so full of intellectual activity, when the culture of the world is becoming broadly equalized, and when even great scientific truths, like the telegraph, or the existence of a planet of the first magnitude, are simultaneous discoveries in different parts of the globe, this fact is not so wonderful after all, and no one is to blame, and each honest worker in the field of thought is to be encouraged and confirmed by it in the truth ; but, consciously to set forth as one's own the thoughts, words, and inventions of another, which have not confessedly become common property, and which belong of right to one man, and to give that impression to others—this is a clear violation of original invention, and of the first principles of honesty. There is a curious instance of seeming plagiarism, though probably it was only an unconscious coincidence, or, it may be, recollection, in a passage that occurs in one of Jeremy Taylor's sermons on " Death," with a passage in a previously published poem of Francis Beaumont. The passage referred to begins with these words : " Where our kings are crowned their ancestors lie buried, and they must walk over their grandsires' heads to take their crown."

*In what, then, may originality of invention be said to consist ?* It consists, in the first place, in enunciating truth which is the subject of our own mental perception and conviction. It is not preaching truth because it is held and believed by others. Old truth must be made new, or must receive a renewed form, by passing through the heat and pressure of our own minds. It must be assimilated into the very body and essence of our own

thought. It must be ours, just as much ours as it was the apostle Paul's or Pascal's. We must ourselves preach that we do know, and testify that we have seen and believed. If we speak of *thoughts*, or ideas, in contradistinction from *truths*, we see at once that there are many ideas that have sprung up in original minds, that are peculiar to these minds, and that bear the lineaments of their origin. These cannot be run through our own minds, and come out with a new stamp of our own upon them ; they must be left as they are ; and if used by us, their authorship should be acknowledged. Individual thoughts and ideas about a truth, and new aspects of it discovered by different minds, are different from the truth itself, which belongs to all minds.

Even here, in regard to the original proprietorship of thoughts and ideas, there is still some doubt and latitude to be left. " Nearly all the thoughts which can be reached by mere strength of original faculties, have long since been arrived at ; and originality, in any high sense of the word, is now scarcely ever attained but by minds which have undergone elaborate discipline, and are deeply versed in the results of previous thinking. It is Mr. Maurice, I think, who has remarked on the present age, that its most original thinkers are those who have known most thoroughly what has been thought by their predecessors ; and this will always henceforth be the case."<sup>1</sup>

Again, it consists in treating a subject independently, or in using arguments, proofs, and methods which are the result of our own thinking and investigation. We may sometimes take old arguments, but we do not take an argument because it is old, or because another has

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<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill.

used it ; but because we think it is sound, and because we have come upon it in our own thinking, and know its value. We occupy no other man's precise point of view. We use an argument because our own judgment approves of it ; because, even if we have not invented it, we have at least felt its power and our need of it. This principle applies particularly to the plans of sermons. The plan of a sermon is so connected with our whole process of thought upon a subject, it is in fact so truly the reproduction of that process of thought, and is in every way so individual and vital, that for one preacher to use bodily the plan of another man as his own, without making it known, is inexcusable. Therefore, all books which purport to be aids in forming plans of sermons, are moral nuisances, and should be thoroughly condemned. They are the excuses of indolence. This is not saying that a preacher may not legitimately and honestly derive suggestions and helps from others in forming his plan of a sermon, even from those, perhaps, who have written upon the same theme, although that is always a hazardous thing, and one should avoid reading another sermon upon the same subject before writing his own.

Still again, originality consists in inventing subjects that are really new. Truth is so large, and, indeed, limitless in its range, that one may still be an inventor. He can discover new forms of truth, and make new combinations of forms that have never before existed ; and that is a wonderful gain in preaching. There is such a plodding on in familiar ruts of thought, that something really new has all the effect of suddenly turning into a by-road in the woods, that refreshes and awakes the mind ; for nothing so delights the mind, even the mind of the uncultivated, as a new view of truth. Freshness of thought is not a mere weak or dazzling novelty. Vinet has some

pregnant remarks upon this point. "There is, then," he says, "legitimate novelty—a novelty even of subjects—not of doctrines, but of themes. By this means, art, which is an affair of humanity, renovates itself; the gospel is unchangeable, but it is divine. In order to attain the novelty of which we speak, genius is not necessary, and the preacher has only to open his eyes and observe. Let him not confine himself to a general and abstract idea of man, but let him study the men who are before him, and to whom he speaks. If he will but take this pains, he will be new. The study is a difficult one, requiring constant attention—one in which zeal will sustain and direct him, but from which he is not to be excused."

Lastly, originality of invention consists in employing one's own language and style. Who can be in any sense original who does not give the impress and superscription of his individual style to his production? Who can doubt the originality of the writing of Chalmers, or of Robert South? Good or bad, true or false, it was their own.

In concluding this point, we would say, that two great and legitimate sources of originality to the preacher are original exegesis of the Scriptures, and the bringing of one's own experience and observation of life to bear in the treatment of spiritual truth.

3. It should consist of Christian truth. This is required, if for no other reason, for the sake of those whom he addresses. They are to be won to God by means of Christian truth, and they can be won in no other way. Christ, as the way of eternal life, must be in the truth that really converts the soul. As far as the hearers are concerned, there is no room for violating this rule. Whatever does not partake essentially of the nature of Christian truth is not the true



subject of the preacher's instructions. The preacher, besides this, is also positively commissioned and commanded to preach Christian truth, summed up in the brief sentence, "Christ and him crucified." This, it is true, comprehends a vast sweep of truth, as may be illustrated in the preaching of Paul, in which Christ formed the subject-matter—all beginning and ending in Christ. Yet how broad, doctrinally and ethically, was the range of Paul's preaching! It goes to the ordering of our entire human life below, and rises into the sublime mysteries of the life which is to come. What, then, let us ask more particularly, is meant by Christian truth?

(a.) It is that truth which may be assimilated into Christianity. In one sense, all truth may become part of Christianity; but whatever of truth can be just as well treated of and discussed if Christianity were not, or were out of the way, could not properly be called Christian truth. Christianity could hardly, for example, assimilate to itself such a truth as the science of botany, so as to make it an exclusive subject for the pulpit, although botany may be used most happily in the way of illustration, and even of direct teaching, whenever the natural works of God are treated of; but the principles of botany, as far as the science is concerned, could be just as well treated of by a heathen as a Christian, and by a natural philosopher as a Christian preacher; therefore it is more proper for the scientific lecture than for the pulpit.

(b.) It is that truth which tends to edify the soul. Whatever is addressed exclusively to the intellect, or the feelings, or the imagination, or the prudential nature, and does not afford nutriment to the spiritual nature, cannot form the true

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subject-matter of preaching. There must be the bread of life for the soul to feed upon—a fragment of that eternal truth revealed by God's Spirit to the soul. It must be the genuine word of God. Truths, therefore, which end in this earthly sphere of things, which are purely intellectual, scientific, or social truths, should be but incidentally treated of in the pulpit. It is good to apply Christian truth to worldly affairs, and to inculcate wise maxims in regard to the daily business and pursuits of life ; but to preach an entire sermon upon "business thrift," without a higher aim or a deeper moral intent, would be an inexcusable secularization of the pulpit. In like manner scientific subjects which do not nourish the moral or spiritual nature, even if they have a true relation to the general good and enlightenment of men, were better discussed in their own proper places and methods. "In interpreting the soul, and in revealing God, Jesus aimed at more than simply communicating new and ennobling knowledge to the world. What humanity needed was, not merely to understand God ; it needed still more to learn how the soul might be restored to God, and how God might dwell in the soul."<sup>1</sup> The pulpit may be, at times, scientific in its treatment of the higher truth, but it should not sell itself to scientific form ; and even theological scientific discussion may become barren and wholly out of place in the pulpit. While it is true that subjects which treat of the means of true social progress may very properly be introduced into the Christian pulpit, yet subjects which end altogether in questions relating to the principles, arts, and laws of general civilization, in which man in general is discussed and not man in particular—these should not, ordinarily, form

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<sup>1</sup> Young's "Christ in History," p. 144.

its exclusive themes ; such themes are better reserved for the lecture than the sermon. A subject, in fine, which has not, or cannot possibly be made to have, a decidedly spiritual and Christian bearing, which does not radically influence character, which does not prepare the way for Christ to come in the soul, and which does not concern the interests of his eternal kingdom, should not be made a complete and separate subject for the pulpit. Every sermon need not enunciate Christian dogma, but every sermon should breathe the spirit of the gospel, and bear its message of peace to the soul. It should come under that new system of truth, that higher manifestation of the divine in the human, which has Christ for its spiritual centre. It should not be preaching purely to the reason, or to the logical faculty, or to the æsthetical faculty ; but Christ should speak in it to man's spirit, impelling to duty, repentance, and a holy life.

Christian truth, which should be thus the subject of our preaching, may be viewed more specifically still, as consisting of three parts : Christian doctrine, Christian morality, and Christian experience.

(1.) Christian doctrine. Here we find the main subject-matter, or the real staple of preaching. This doctrine is simply the teaching or truth of God which is necessary for the nourishing of the soul. But even this Christian doctrine, as we have said, when treated in a scientific manner, may become the mere nutriment of the intellect, and not of the soul. While, therefore, there should be enough of theological discussion in a sermon to present the subject clearly, to remove its difficulties, to develop it in an orderly manner ; yet, after all, the discussion of truth is not the end of the sermon, which is to awake, edify, renew the soul. As a general

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rule, broad, synthetical views of truth are the best. Paul, though a born dialectician, will be found, when thoroughly studied, to present doctrinal truth in an almost totally unscientific, and oftentimes even illogical form ; for while he preached doctrine, it was rather in the living forms and teachings of the Spirit of God, than in those systematic methods which we commonly associate with the idea of "doctrine"—good for the treatise, but not good for the pulpit.

Dr. Alexander thus remarks on this point : " I am impressed with the importance of choosing great subjects for sermons, such as creation, the deluge, the atonement, the last things. A man should begin early to grapple with great subjects. An athlete (2 Tim. 2 : 5) gains might only by great exertions. So that a man does not overstrain his powers, the more he wrestles the better ; but he must wrestle, not merely take a great subject, and dream over it, and play with it."

We should agree generally with this suggestion ; but still we would find the great subject in the text itself, or in some portion of the divine word, rather than to find a text for the subject, even if it be of a doctrinal character. We would have even "doctrinal" preaching to be scriptural rather than exclusively theological. The "great subjects" that Dr. Alexander speaks of will come more readily through concentrated thought upon some definite passage of God's word than through the choice of a great subject, commonly so called. It is better, for example, to find the doctrine of the atonement as it lies originally and naturally in the Epistle to the Romans, and be filled and inspired by the study of this whole Epistle, than deliberately to write a sermon on the abstract and theological doctrine of the "atonement," and preach upon it in the ordinary formal mode of discussion. "In our



anxiety to set forth a sound code of truth, we have been directing men, for example, to the naked formula of justification, rather than to Him by whom we are saved, and who all the day long stretches out his arms to receive the returning sinner. We have been teaching men, perhaps, to trust to a *system*, instead of reposing on a personal Saviour.”<sup>1</sup> The most profitable form of preaching is that which, drawn fresh from scriptural sources, unites the doctrinal and the practical, and recognizes the fact that the end of Christian doctrine is to teach men how to live a good and holy life. Doctrinal preaching should not always be in a topical form, but in the form also of expository and exegetical preaching, upon which we have had already much to say. The true teaching of the Scriptures may, perhaps, be better drawn out in this way than in any other. It is quarrying directly from the mine.

Controversial preaching of Christian doctrine is rarely profitable. It may be sometimes needful ; but, generally speaking, the setting forth of the true doctrine is the best way to refute doctrinal error ; for a minister of the gospel is not called to be a heresy-hunter ; but he should, by God’s aid, make such a blaze of light about him that falsehood cannot live in it.

**Controversial  
preaching.**

Preaching upon Christian evidences is generally considered to be useful ; yet, after all, is not the best evidence of Christianity the manifestation of the truth in the love of it ? The defensive side of truth should certainly not be dwelt upon too long in a pulpit which should speak with assurance and authority. Why should there be a timidly apolo-

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<sup>1</sup> Oxenden’s “ Treatise,” p. 109.

getic tone forever going forth from our Christian pulpits, as if the Bible were an unknown book that needs to be always proving its divine authority? or as if it had not been attested by ages of light? or as if the books and words of men, of the great thinkers of past and present times, brought together, could equal in creative power and brightness one ray of the sun of God's word? or as if Christ were an obscure personage still traversing the hills of Judæa in peasant guise, and not having where to lay his head? If Christianity has not proved itself by this time to be true, it will never prove itself to be so; and therefore we would have preachers take higher ground, and prove the truth of Christianity by setting it forth more vividly, faithfully, and comprehensively. They may be assured that this is their one duty, and that Christianity is able to take care of its own evidences.

We do not say by this that the preacher should not study the Christian evidences, and that it is not good for him to establish these in his mind, and to bring them into his preaching and pastoral instruction, for confirmation in the truth; but we do say that to preach too much on the evidences will make people finally begin to doubt and to question. It is better to preach Christ, and trust to the gospel to prove itself. In pretty much the same

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category we would place preaching upon Natural Theology. Vinet considers that, under the Christian system, there is no such thing, properly speaking, as natural religion. He thinks that Christianity takes up, completes, and transforms natural truths, so that they become Christian truths. Undoubtedly, no Christian preacher should treat of natural religion excepting from a Christian point of view; he should not descend to the former level of uninspired truth; he should show, rather, that Christianity *is* the

natural religion, or that it has in perfection all that nature may have in its elements, and something infinitely more. Christianity can reason down upon natural religion better than natural religion can reason up to Christianity ; for while nature, as the creation of God, and thus, in one sense, the manifestation of God, may not be neglected, yet the Christian minister should not lose sight of his higher *Christian* vantage ground, and preach natural religion or natural theology. In fine, the great permanent theme of Christian doctrinal preaching is, that fact of human redemption, in all its wide-spread ramifications and relations, which was wrought out through the incarnation, life, atoning death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How many congregations languish under the preaching of eloquent divines, because they are not simply and earnestly taught the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, wherein are the beginnings of all spiritual life ; for Christ alone is the life, whatever else there is of knowledge, eloquence, or philosophy.

(2.) Christian morality. This is the setting forth in preaching of the principles of Christian ethics as applied to life. It is (1) telling men what true morality is, in its relation to God as the original source or giver of the moral law to man as a subject of law. It is (2) the application of the moral law to all human actions, both to man individually, and to man as related to other men and society. It is (3) the setting forth of the new influences and obligations which Christianity has brought into morality, or the introduction into ethics of the higher law of Christian love, of the personal teachings, example, and Spirit of Christ, of the new virtues and fruits of the Holy Spirit's creation. It would treat of man's moral relations under the Christian law of love to the family, the

**Christian  
morality.**

Church, the State, the race—it regards comprehensively the whole practical conduct of life, as governed by the Christian moral law, negatively as regards vice, positively as regards virtue. What a wide sweep this kind of preaching may take in the fields of man's almost infinite moral relations, need but be hinted ; and, as yet it is a fresh field, because preaching has been heretofore so greatly confined to the dogmatic aspects of truth. Christ himself made one chief element of his preaching to consist in the right interpretation of the moral law—the law of duty and life ; and here is to be one of the reforms of the pulpit—that it should be more practical, leading to “charity out of a pure heart ;” that it should deal with the whole of life in a Christian point of view—with man's personal relations as son, husband, father, friend, neighbor, citizen, business man, and member of the human brotherhood. “We want a Christianity that is Christian across counters, over dinner-tables, behind the neighbor's back as in his face. We want a Christianity that we can find in the temperance of the meal, in moderation of dress, in respect for authority, in amiability at home, in veracity and simplicity in mixed society. We want fewer gossiping, slandering, gluttonous, peevish, conceited, bigoted Christians. To make them effectual, all our public religious measures, institutions, benevolent agencies, missions, need to be managed on a high-toned, scrupulous, and unquestionable scale of honor, without evasion or partisanship, or overmuch of the serpent's cunning. The hand that gives away the Bible must be unspotted from the world. The money that sends the missionary to the heathen must be honestly earned. In short, both the arms of the Church—justice and mercy—must be stretched out, working for man, strengthening the brethren, or else your faith is vain, and ye are yet in



your sins.”<sup>1</sup> The morals of trade is a subject by itself, and a painfully fruitful one under the light of the Christian civilization of the age. When it is said that in England and America a strictly conscientious business man, who will condescend in no particular to the hundred illicit practices of his particular line of business, is apt to be driven out of it or to be unsuccessful in it, then it is time for God’s ministers and prophets to thunder the law of God to the consciences of business men who are professed or nominal Christians. The minister of God’s gospel should never for one instant become the flatterer or encourager of wealth wrongfully obtained. He should preach integrity to young business men, and tell them to be and remain poor rather than trade on borrowed capital, speculate in gambling stock operations, or make haste to be rich before the time. If a Christian is not an honest man, there is no use in saying anything more about Christianity.

Dr. Chalmers was eminently a preacher of practical morality. “He set his face against every form of evil, both in the pulpit and out of it. He particularly pressed upon country people thorough honesty and uprightness, and the practice of the law of love by abstaining from all malice and evil speaking. The ostentation of flaming orthodoxy, or talk of religious experience which was not borne out by the life, was the object of his thorough abhorrence.” When he preached his commercial sermons in Glasgow, business men would leave the church with expressions of violent hostility, but they would be present when he preached the succeeding discourse. To tell these men of influence and high social standing that their city was given up to the idolatry of money, and

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. F. D. Huntington.

that where the love of money is, the love of God could not be—to show them how even business integrity might coexist with a corrupt heart, and that this fair show of virtue might spring from pure selfishness—required no common courage.

Professor Shepard said to his theological pupils : “ Young men ! preach the duties. Often recur to the tables of the law, and dwell upon ‘ Thou shalt ’ and ‘ Thou shalt not,’ lest you fill the Church with converted scoundrels.”

Fontaine, a Huguenot preacher at Taunton, England, expounded the text “ Thou shalt not steal ” so effectively as to make a bitter personal enemy of an influential member of his congregation, who, unknown to him, had been engaged in a doubtful business transaction ; and it resulted in his being driven from the pastoral charge of the church. It is good to read of such faithfulness in a preacher ; for the flattery of the rich, and sometimes the total lack of reproof of the unrighteously rich—in other words, the ignoring and thus the supporting of absolute dishonesty—is the besetting sin of ministers.

In our methods of ethical preaching we should be careful not to confound Christian morality with mere natural

virtue, for morality may be treated in a false way in the pulpit, by disconnecting it from the life-springs of Christian faith. “ **Christian morality not to be confounded with natural virtue.** ” Morals can seldom gain living energy without the impulsive force derived from spirituals. Plato

and Cicero may indeed talk of the surpassing beauty of virtue ; nor do we doubt that a man’s own self-respect may make him choose to die, rather than live degraded in his own eyes by deviating from his ideal of right conduct. Let old stoicism be confessed to be noble and honorable ; yet it makes the mind too ex-

clusively reflexive, and engenders pride and self-confidence. Virtue is an abstraction, a set of wise rules—not a person—and cannot call out affection, as an exterior to the soul does. On the contrary, God is a person; and the love of him is of all affections far the most energetic in exciting us to realize our highest idea of moral excellence, and in clearing the moral sight. Other things being equal (a condition not to be forgotten), a spiritual man will hold a higher and purer morality than a mere moralist. Not only does duty manifest itself to him as an ever-expanding principle, but, since a larger part of duty becomes pleasant and easy when performed under the stimulus of love, the will is enabled to concentrate itself more in that which remains difficult, and greater power of performance is attained. Hence, 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,' is fulfilled in those 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.' " <sup>1</sup>

Moral duty may be treated by the preacher philosophically, or rationally, or prudentially, and yet not vitally, as touched by the Christian principle, which concerns itself with the inner rule of right, and the mind's free choice to do right. The virtue of temperance may be made a purely stoical, or political, or hygienic virtue, and be violently torn out of the circle of Christian virtues and of that Christian character which is moulded freely by the great law of righteousness and love.

The disinterested character of virtue, as opposed to the utilitarian school, and as coming nearer to **Disinterested** the Christian principle of virtue, should be **character of** upheld, lest virtue be made to be a mere **virtue.** happiness-bringing expedient. The Hobbes theory of

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<sup>1</sup> F. W. Newman, "The Soul," p. 124.

virtue, to which that of Paley is closely allied, that virtue is simply what is best for man and for society, and that it should be supported because virtue best promotes the sum of human happiness—that “virtue is only a judicious, and vice an injudicious, pursuit of happiness”—this, we believe, is a totally inadequate view of the matter.<sup>1</sup> Virtue, as a principle of self-love directed to gain heaven and shun hell, though a true motive, belongs to the prudential class of motives, and is not, when taken strictly by and in itself, a moral or religious motive, it is an expedient and not a principle. Virtue is something more profound. It belongs to the absolute and unchangeable constitution of things. Since man possesses a nature made in the moral image of God, on which God has written the immutable law of right, so man should do right because it is right, because it is the highest law of his nature, and of God, and not from selfish motives. He should love virtue in all its forms of justice, holiness, goodness, and truth, for virtue’s sake. The preacher should appeal mainly to this higher nature in man, to the true dignity of his original nature made in God’s moral image, to the abstract sense of right and morality. This gives him an immense advantage. While doing this he may appeal also to the more concrete idea of virtue, or to the principle of right in its actual relation to men’s circumstances where the idea of human imperfection, and, to a certain sense, of expediency comes in. The Scriptures recognize this to a certain extent. They warn us to seek salvation. But what is this salvation, and what is it worth if it is not salvation from sin, salvation from moral evil, salvation from what is wrong? Differ as we may from Herbert Spencer in other things, his position is

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<sup>1</sup> See Lecky’s “History of European Morals.”



a true one where he says, "Granted that we are chiefly interested in ascertaining what is relatively right ; it still follows that we must first consider what is absolutely right ; since the one conception presupposes the other. That is to say, though we must ever aim to do what is best for the present times, yet we must ever bear in mind what is abstractedly best ; so that the changes may be toward it, and not away from it. Unattainable as pure rectitude is, and may long continue to be, we must keep an eye on the compass which tells us whereabouts it lies, or we shall otherwise be liable to wander in some quite opposite direction ; and how immense would be the evils avoided and the benefits gained if *a posteriori* morality were enlightened by *a priori* morality." <sup>1</sup>

Christianity comes in here and supplies the grand personal motive to virtue—the law and love of God—devotion to the personal Christ—the loving imitation of his life and character ; but still the moral foundations of virtue are the same in the Christian and in the heathen and in all moral creatures ; it is the law of right which the Creator has impressed upon the human spirit, and by which God himself, the Best Spirit, guides his own acts.

But the Christian preacher has immense advantages over the mere moralist in preaching morality, from what should be his greater love to men, and from the Christian standpoint of Christ's work for sinful men, delivering them from sin, and righting them, so to speak, in their moral characters. He may preach the law of morality with infinitely more of tolerance and tender application to the individual heart than the natural or Stoical moralist. He preaches morality from the side

**How  
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preachers  
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morality.**

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<sup>1</sup> "Essays," American edition, p. 24.

of love. Yet he should ever keep the moral ideal high and pure ; he should rise above the utilitarian view of virtue ; he should seek his ideals in heavenly things, in the perfect law and nature of God, and in the disinterested and self-sacrificing love of Christ.

He should preach honesty, benevolence, justice, forgiveness, temperance, chastity, and all the Christian virtues, from this true principle of accord with immutable right ; aided, impelled, and purified by the Christian motives of love and of duty to a personal God and Father, through which motives sinful beings can alone perfectly obey the moral law. This is that love which is better than knowledge, and which is the fulfilling of the law. It is indeed one of the great ends of preaching, if not the great end, according to St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, to bring men into that charity out of a pure heart which makes men truly righteous, which builds them up in a true holiness, which moulds them by the truth and spirit of God into good men.

A modern writer well remarks here : " Christianity founds morality upon theology, and besides theological doctrines it offers other influences—the human example of Christ, the lives of prophets, apostles, and saints—in order to accomplish that which it regards as the essential and difficult preparation for morality ; namely, the general disposing of the will toward right and orderly action. It is in laying this theological basis and in bringing to bear these preparatory influences that Christian teachers occupy themselves almost exclusively. I do not find fault with what they do, but it seems to me none the less lamentable that they should leave the direct teaching of morality almost entirely undone." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> " Roman Imperialism etc.," p. 261.

This author further counsels that preachers should use the examples of good men of our own day, "of the virtue that is near us in time and space," as well as the lives and examples of biblical saints and holy characters; and that moral preaching should take a wider range in this respect; but this suggestion, though worthy of being carried into practice, may be overdone, and sermons may degenerate into biographical lectures and eulogies, and lose out of them the divinely teaching element of inspiration.

There is also the interesting field of the application of Christian morality to questions of government, citizenship, and politics. Tocqueville says, "It appears to me that morality is divisible into two portions, both equally important in the eyes of God, but which his ministers do not teach with equal energy. One respects private life—the duties of mankind, a father, children, husbands and wives; the other respects public life—the duties of every citizen to his country and to the portion of the human race to which he specially belongs. Am I mistaken in thinking that our clergy care much about the first branch of morality, and little about the second?" As to the question of preaching upon *politics*, it is true that human politics, in the ordinary sense of the term, should not form the theme of the preacher of eternal truth; but a higher idea of the subject of politics, viewed as the application of Christian ethics to human affairs and government, and even in the old Greek sense of *η πολιτικη* as the life-principle of the State—this is a different thing; and here it comes fairly under Tocqueville's second division of public morality. Upon this subject the preacher is conscientiously bound, under proper limitations, and according to the proportions of truth, to bestow his thought

**Political  
preaching.**

and give his instructions. And he is the more bound to do so when those instructions are peculiarly needed, when public opinion has gone wrong, when there is a decided and dangerous perversion of right principles in relation to civil matters, when men and the State have become oppressive and unjust, and when liberty is imperilled. Then the preacher should stand up boldly, and proclaim the right, even as did John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul. This is not only the preacher's privilege, but his duty ; he would be basely derelict in duty not to do so. As an American, he would be false to the history and example of a Puritan pulpit, which, in the Old World and the New, has ever upheld the cause of freedom. And yet that is not advocating political preaching, of which, it may be, there has been too much in the past. Dr. South was what we would call a "political preacher," even as, doubtless, many who opposed him were "political preachers ;" for men like South fought for their party in the pulpit, and with all kinds of weapons ; and their minds were evidently more ardently engaged in these partisan conflicts than in the great ends of preaching the gospel. In the legitimate application of preaching to politics—to quote from another—four principles are to be observed or aimed after, (1.) A recognition of God as the moral governor of nations and source of national authority. (2.) A recognition of the universal brotherhood and equality of man in civil rights ; requiring rulers to enact such laws as bear equally on the whole population. (3.) The inculcation of the moral law of God as the supreme guide in all legislative, judicial, and executive business of our public officers, and in all political action of private citizens. (4.) The historic proof of absolute certainty of the retribution for national crimes. Politics, then, should be a part, and a principal part, of the studies



of the clergy. "To discover and popularize the lessons that may be drawn from our history, to idealize the nation and familiarize it in its unity to the minds of its members, is a most vital part of the moral teaching of the community. The phrase, political religion, may have very different meanings; there are two senses in which it signifies a hateful thing, but there is a third sense, in which it is an admirable and necessary thing. It is a hateful thing when it means religion made the tool of a political party, or governing class; as when the Church consecrated the absolutism of the Stuarts, or, on a smaller scale, when the parson preaches submission to the squire. It is a hateful thing when it means the Church interfering with public affairs merely with a view of strengthening its own position, of preserving its own influence, or privileges, or endowments. But when a Church is independent of political parties, and sure of the respect of the people, when it can speak with impartiality and with authority, then political religion means only the purifying of politics by connecting them with duty, honor, and piety; it means only the discouragement of faction, the assertion of general principles, the keeping before the eyes of the people a political ideal. And as in the former sense political religion is only another name for corrupt religion, in the latter sense it is another name for worthy and noble politics."<sup>1</sup> This passage has a good sound and contains much truth; but whether the hard-worked minister of the gospel can, beyond general principles, do much in the way of profound study and elucidation of the difficult science of political economy, is a question. He should intelligently study and comprehend the constitution and laws of his coun-

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<sup>1</sup> "Roman Imperialism," p. 292.

try, and should be established in the principles of right legislation and of sound government. He is called upon to set forth the moral foundations of the State and of society, as related to the law and government of God, not to turn lecturer on political science, or social science, or the relation of labor to capital, or such topics.

To speak more particularly of questions of moral reform, while these should enter into, yet even these should not form the main substance and material of true preaching ; for the preacher should be seen to have the deeper mind to delight to make Christ all in all ; and he should speak on these subjects of moral reform as Christ's messenger, as expressing his pure and loving will ; for Christian morality is, after all, nothing but the carrying out and the universal application of the law of love. Dr. Arnold always maintained the idea that the true end and work of the Church was "the putting down of moral evil." But it must be put down by moral and spiritual weapons, by reason, and love, and the gospel, not by force and violence. There is a noticeable difference between being a Christian reformer and a Christian preacher, and the Christian preacher should be both ; but he should be a preacher distinctively and primarily. Let a minister be, first of all, a preacher of Christian truth, and then he will, of necessity, be a reformer ; let him look well to the positive side of truth—to the establishment of truth—and from this position let him attack the institutions of sin. In this way he will preserve his balance, and not become denunciatory, or lose the blessed charity of the gospel for human sins. With the conditions and limitations thus laid down, the gospel is to be applied freely, boldly, searchingly, to all relations of human life and society. Few American preachers have done this with more

power than Dr. Channing, though in doctrinal views we differ with him ; but to him belongs the credit of nobly and freely applying in his preaching the principles of Christian ethics to matters of social, governmental, and public reform ; and his sermons, in this respect, are still models, not only in their eloquent thought, but in the large sympathy which they manifest for the moral condition and prospects of the whole human family.

While thus advocating strongly the preaching of moral reform under the conditions that have been laid down, we would guard against any encouragement of that kind of minute police system of moral-reform preaching which pries into other men's business, which hectors and dragoons them into duty, and which labors to mend every little social abuse, error, and evil in the community, in this public way ; but on the contrary, we would advocate the idea that the truth itself should be faithfully, patiently, lovingly, fearlessly preached, and it will, in due time, correct those lesser faults and abuses.

Before leaving this point of ethical preaching, which is a comparatively new field, we would treat as a separate question involving most important principles, the topic of the relations of the law to the gospel. In this argument things may be repeated which have been already enunciated, but it may be useful to the student to have this vital subject put into the form of a separate discussion.

There is no error more subtle and dangerous than the idea that the law of God does not form a perfect standard of action, but adapts itself to man's wishes and imperfect moral condition. The conception that the law is thus a shifting rule is destructive of all true righteousness. Obedience to a right moral standard is as imperative

**Relations of  
the law to  
the gospel.**

under the gospel as under the law. The justification of the gospel does not touch those who are disobedient to the law of God in their hearts. Christianity is no paradise of the lawless or dreamland of lotus-eaters. The grand old principle of *duty* is as truly a watchword of the religion of Christ as it was of the religion of Moses. Often the believer, hard pressed by the temptations and trials of life, can say nothing but this: "I will just try to do the will of God, and press on."

The law of God in its most comprehensive sense is simply the manifestation of the will of God. It is the pure expression of his spirit and nature. It is that desire, or command, which goes forth from God as the stream from the fountain; and as there is but one divine lawgiver, so there can be but one divine law, the undivided and perfect expression of the mind of the lawgiver, unchangeable and eternal. No new events or facts in the moral universe can change the law—not even the great facts of sin and redemption. These modify only the relations of the subject to the law.

Here, then, we have a perfect standard—"the law is holy, and just, and good." To suggest the possibility of God's putting forth any expression of an imperfect moral standard, or aught but a perfectly righteous one, were less respectful than to impugn the glory of the lower heavens and cast contempt on the law that leads in harmony the movements of the natural universe. It were far less destructive to deny the perfection of a physical than of a moral law.

If the law is thus perfect and immutable, if it is not lowered to meet the changing conditions of an imperfect and sinful creature, how comes it about that Christianity seems to build upon another principle of perfection? How is it that the apostle to the Gentiles in so many



words declares concerning believers that they "are not under the law;" and that "by the works of the law no flesh can be justified;" and, above all, that the law is done away by Christ?

Has the law, indeed, abdicated the throne since the coming of Christ? Has the law of God changed itself into some poor, inferior thing by which its absolute claims upon the spirit of man are nullified?

These questions are difficult; we would attempt in the briefest manner to offer some humble suggestions toward their explanation.

In discussing the relations of the law to the gospel, it is necessary to understand the meaning which the apostle Paul commonly gives to the word "law."

In those places where the word is used without the article [*νόμος*], as in Romans 3:12; 3:31; 4:13, 14, 15; 5:13, 20; 7:1; 10:4; 13:8; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:21; 3:11, 18, 21; 4:5; Phil. 3:6; and also where the principal noun has no article, as *ἔργα νόμου*—in those places it is laid down by Winer and other scholars that the reference is invariably to the Mosaic law.

Undoubtedly this is true; but if there were no other idea attached to the "law" than simply that of the law of Moses, and especially of its prescriptive and ceremonial part, the question of the doing away of the law by the dispensation of Christ would not be so difficult.

If, when Paul speaks of his own righteousness which is of the law, and in which he was blameless, he referred simply to the Mosaic dispensation and to no other principle, then we can see the justness of his self-condemnation, that his righteousness was no true righteousness; and if the "works of the law" were merely "ritual prescriptions," we can readily believe that by them no man is justified.

Being by birth and education a Jew, the apostle, when he speaks of the "law," refers without question to the Mosaic law ; but, speaking also as a Christian, he does this in a somewhat secondary sense ; that is, it was the law of God expressed through the mouth and the institutions of Moses. The principle of divine law was deeper than the Mosaic law. Those to whom he wrote, as Jews, regarded the law of God as embodied in the institutions of Moses. That was to them the sole expression of the moral and prescriptive law of God. That was *the* law. They were right in this, because God's law was given through Moses ; and, in so far as the Mosaic institutions expressed the eternal principles of righteousness revealed to Moses, it was the law of God. What was merely temporary and ceremonial in it is done away. What belonged to a special outward theocracy suited to the religious condition of the age and of the race, is abolished. But underneath all was the eternal law of righteousness, which belongs to no particular age or people, and which appeals to the universal moral consciousness. To this, above all, Paul undoubtedly referred when he spoke of the law—to this larger and deeper idea of law, embracing the Mosaic law wherein it comprehended the eternal principles of righteousness, but going beyond and beneath the outward institution and precept.

This law, which speaks to the conscience of every man, both Jew and Gentile, which is perfect, which is one and unchangeable, is, nevertheless, according to the apostle, insufficient as a principle of salvation. It is not lowered an iota as a moral standard by Christianity, but yet it is powerless to save. It contains no principle of new spiritual life. While it remains as a perfect standard to the righteous, it is a death-principle to the sinner. He who lives under it as a principle of justification and salva-

tion is spiritually dead. Why is this? The answer is all-important in its practical bearings.

Real obedience is something of the heart ; it supposes a right disposition of mind. The outward obedience proceeds from the inward disposition. God can see this, if man cannot. He can also perceive the absence of this right disposition of heart ; and if it be absent, then the "righteousness which is by the law," is only, after all, a seeming righteousness, and by its best works, now as in Paul's time, no man is justified.

This right disposition of heart—how shall it be obtained? Here the law is powerless, "for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." But the law is only the imperative expression of an externally prescribed rule of action, and it is totally unable to produce an internal change of disposition.<sup>1</sup> It indeed commands obedience, but it gives no ability to obey. It requires a spiritual righteousness, but it is utterly impotent to impart that new life from which such righteousness flows.

This new life must first be created within the sinful soul, and then the obedience, springing up from within, meets the law and flows on in the currents of the law's righteous requirements. All its acts done in this spirit have the beautiful character of "good works." Then the law has no restraining or coercive element, and it is even as if there were no law at all.

Thus it is said that the believer in Christ is no longer "under the law." When, through the power of faith in Christ, a new divine life comes into the soul, the man is delivered from the law of sin and death. The law is for

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<sup>1</sup> See Neander's "Planting and Training," p. 236.

the sinner who disobeys it, and not for the righteous man who loves it. The sinner feels the weight of the yoke, but with the believer the bondage is over because the spirit is free. He lives and works out his religious life under a new principle, not of law but of grace. Having been made a partaker of the "divine nature," he delights inwardly in the law of God, and this becomes the law of his own nature which he unconsciously obeys from a free impulse of love. This love is the fulfilling of the law.

Thus we have revealed to us the new dispensation of faith in Jesus Christ, whose central principle is love ; and they who linger under the old system of law and works, may be strong men—may do many wonderful works—may, even to the eye of God, possess the hidden root of righteousness in them, but they are not distinctively Christians ; they are not free men in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. They are not believers after the pattern of Paul and John. They do not know the spring of a divine life and power which makes "new men" in Christ. The religion of law may restrain sin for a while, but it cannot cure it. It may coerce and hold down the power of evil and punish it for a thousand years or forever, but it cannot destroy it. But the religion of love can alone regenerate this sinful world and bring in the "new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

This truth of the right relations of the law to the gospel which has been briefly discussed, has its important practical bearings upon the subject of Christian preaching and living. We sometimes hear it said, that in order effectually to check the sin there is in the world we must preach the law. The gospel may do for calm weather, but the law is for times of outbreking sin, of storm,



violence, unrighteousness, and wrong. In a period when evil comes in like a flood, when good men grow faint, when corruption and iniquity abound, when business integrity and political honor in signal instances fail, and even the Church of God seems to be sunk in unrighteousness and materialism, then we must lay aside the mild weapons of the gospel and take up the flaming thunderbolts of the law. Then Christ must retire weeping out of sight, and Moses must come down from Mount Sinai with the tables of the law in his hands, his countenance very terrible to behold, and utter once more the awful retributions of the decalogue. Then we must preach the strong doctrines, and, above all, the doctrines and sanctions of the law. The law is the mighty helper and the only sure rock of defence when iniquity prevails. This, too, is said by good men who are preachers of the gospel, but whose gospel thus seems to break down just at the test-point, and they are seen, after all, in this view at least, to be preachers of Moses rather than ministers of Christ. Their philosophy of the gospel, it is to be feared, does not grasp its deepest life, its divinest conception of power as related to the human soul.

If the gospel be not found to be equal to all the possible emergencies of the soul, of society, and of the world, if it be only a smooth-weather gospel, then it is not the power to save the world from sin and to make it holy, which it has been announced to be, and we must substitute in its place some stronger force, moral or physical.

The law, as that perfect standard of moral obligation which comes down from the will of God, is, as we have said, just as imperative under the gospel as under the law itself. The standard of right is not lowered one iota by the gospel; for the seat of this principle is in that intuitive sense of right which belongs to the nature

of the soul, and which we call conscience ; and the gospel is as truly addressed to man's conscience as to man's heart ; it interprets the law of God to the conscience in its most spiritual meaning ; but Christ does more than Moses even for the conscience.

The work of Moses for the conscience, though glorious, was mainly negative. It was minatory and convictive. The law sets forth the prohibition and the sanction. It says, "Thou shalt not." It convinces of unrighteousness. It punishes the guilty. But Christ's relations to the conscience are of a positive, productive, and infinitely more glorious kind. He renews the conscience unto good works and a genuine righteousness. He implants a new holy life. He does not leave the conscience consuming under the fiery thunderbolts of the law that kill, kill, kill. He does not simply proclaim its punishment for sin. He does not merely condemn its unrighteousness, but he gives it true righteousness. "The soul that sinneth it shall die"—"the wages of sin is death," are solemn truths of the gospel as well as of the law, but the divine and life-giving power of the gospel is not in them. They are not that essential gospel which brings life and righteousness.

He who preaches the law then as the grand and last resource when wickedness is rampant, when integrity fails, when the very throne of righteousness and the kingdom of God in the world—the Church—is corrupted, shows that he knows not what the gospel is and where its power lies ; since his is the ministry of condemnation and death, just when it should be one of renovation and life.

If we accept the principle of love—the love of God in Christ—as the great principle of salvation from sin, we will not give it up when sin shows its most concentrated

and terrible might. If love, as manifest in Christ, is not sufficient to restore the wrongest conscience to right action, as well as to renew the affections and enlighten the intellect, then we would look somewhere else for a system which can save the whole man and make him perfect in every part. We would build upon another system of righteousness than that whose working principle is Faith, and whose central power is Love.

It is now confessed to be the case that a lamentable divorce is apparent between the doctrine and the life of the Church, or, in other words, between its religion and its morality. Even a man so commonly right in his judgments as Mr. Gladstone, is quoted as saying that their belief has very little practical influence over men's lives ; and that religious doctrine itself is more a matter of opinion, education, and imagination, than of real character. Certainly it would seem to be so in many instances at the present day. It is so not because the Church is worse than it was in the primitive ages, but because the power of the world and of material things has gained a virulence betokening, it may be, its waning strength as opposed to the kingdom of God, or to things unseen and spiritual. The very cases of business dishonesty and defalcation in the Church which startle communities like the fall of a tower of a beleaguered city in the night, show that these things are deeper felt, that the conflict is more earnest, that sin is recognized as a more fearful enemy, that righteousness, even if harder pressed, is acknowledged to be more precious and divine—the very city and dwelling of God. But however this may be, the phase of evil now to be seen in the Church is that of the alarming lowering of its moral tone, as shown, above all, in its relation to the conduct of those business affairs which belong especially to this life, and which it shares in common with the

world. President Woolsey has said that this manifestation of evil was only an outcropping of that same spirit of covetousness against which Christ's disciples of old were warned by their Master as the deadly leaven of the Pharisees. But how is this spirit of unrighteousness to be met and overcome, and how did Christ meet it when he was on earth? He did not meet it by saying that the law was done away by his coming, and that the gates were thrown open to all unrighteousness; on the contrary he came to confirm and fulfill the law. He was born under the law and he died to sustain it in its wholeness. He met unrighteousness not by yielding to it, nor even by condemning it, but by creating a new holy life. He brought pardon and hope to the soul condemned and crushed by the law. He wrought truth in the inward parts. He broke the chain of covetousness by offering to the worldly mind a higher object of love than worldly gain. He implanted a higher faith, that not only justified but made just, and that led the soul out from its slavery to ungodly things. He destroyed the power of the sensual in man's heart by infusing into it a new spirit. He changed the hearts of those—whether worldly men or professed moralists—who truly believed in him, and who admitted him into their hearts as Lord, as the ruling principle of their lives by faith.

Take but one instance. The "publicans" of the New Testament were men whose business it was to collect the Roman revenues from a subjugated people. They were the financial agents of what has been called "the most detestable of all modes of managing a revenue." They were the custom-house officers of that day, endowed with almost arbitrary power and immunity, and thus were tempted constantly by their position to exaction and dishonesty in money dealings. They were familiar with all



the tricks of trade, with the double-dealings and ins and outs of governmental employees whose business it was to fleece the people in order to make themselves rich ; and the popular estimate was not, perhaps, far from wrong which invariably linked together " publicans and sinners." But when once, passing by the receipt of custom, the Lord simply said to one of those detested publicans, " Follow me !" he to whom the Lord thus spoke was the evangelist who recorded the Lord's story of the Pharisee and the publican, and the publican's prayer, " God be merciful to me a sinner." Following Jesus he gave up his worldly gain, and became one of the number of the twelve apostles, and of the founders of the Christian Church. This was the secret of his higher life, emerging as it did from a low and it may be selfish and unrighteous business career. This was the beginning in him of a new life of self-abnegation and true righteousness. The love of a personal Redeemer and Lord took the place of the love of self and of selfish gain. Is there any better way to break up the power of covetousness, of a deep-seated business immorality in men's hearts, than for them simply to obey Christ's words, " Follow me" ? Is there not a charm in Christ which lures men away from all unrighteousness and all unrighteous lusts and lifts them above the world into a heavenly realm of holiness, purity, and love ?

The way, then, to righteousness is not by law but by love. " The whole secret is to follow Christ, and to hold cheap what the world desires." It is to detach the soul from its old worldly selfishness and to build it on a new foundation of righteousness, which is in Christ. This is the old and the new way. It is the way of a change in the supreme affection of the being. It is the way of love and not of law.

Should we not, then, it may be asked, ever preach the holy law in order to make men righteous? We should preach the law, and we should preach the law as a preparation for and a part of the gospel. We should preach it as Christ teaches us to preach it, not as "it was said by them of old time," but as "I say unto you." He who does this is honored of Christ. "Whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." We should preach the law in the light of the New Testament, intelligently, positively, as a means to a higher end, not exclusively as a system of condemnation, of terror, of warning even, but in its true relations to the mind and to Christ's work in and for the mind; in order to show men how the law may be disobeyed and how sin may arise, or what *sin* really is, thus making the law a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ. In this way the apostle Paul preached the law. If it do not lead to Christ and to a better righteousness in him, he seemed almost to scorn the law and its works. The righteousness of Christians must *exceed* the righteousness of the legalists. It must have in it a living element of divine love and obedience which the law never could impart.

Here, then, is the place of the law under the gospel, that by it men may see clearly what their duty is and how far they have departed from the perfect standard, or from that sense of innate righteousness, that eternal law of God, which is written on the conscience. Thus the law brings the knowledge of sin. Thus appealing to men's own reasons and consciences, the terrible sanctions of the law have their effect. Men see that these sanctions are

right. In this way the law condemns them. In this way we may hope, as preachers, to convict of sin and to awaken repentance which springs from a clear view of the righteousness of the law. Otherwise you may tell men they are sinners and they will assent and sin on. Otherwise you may appeal to the fears and passions of men in vain. Otherwise you may preach hell-fire till doom sounds and it will not persuade men to repent. And in no case will the simple preaching of the law, without Christ, produce righteousness. The death-dealing terrors of the Lord are, under the gospel, to be proclaimed in order to "persuade men" to look to something higher, better, and really life-giving, to Him who is "the life."

But there are Christians, you say, who are clearly convicted of acts of deliberate dishonesty, who for the sake "of filthy lucre" have defrauded their neighbors, and have swindled the whole community right and left with their eyes open. It can only be answered that whenever such cases of cool and deliberate business dishonesty have occurred in the membership of the Christian Church, they have been cases, in all probability, of those who have not as yet really felt the renewing power of the gospel upon their hearts and lives. They have been men who, like Judas Iscariot, may at the first, perhaps, have experienced some superficial feeling of sympathy drawing them toward Christ, but they have never really loved him; they have never yielded themselves wholly to him, and the root of selfishness has never been cut up in their hearts. They, therefore, do not prove the powerlessness of the gospel to prevent men from being knaves, since they have never themselves felt its true power. For as sinful men in all ages have been rescued from the power of all forms of sin by the gospel, so the gospel is power-

ful to rescue men from dishonesty, and to sow in their hearts true righteousness.

We would say, therefore, emphatically, let the old gospel be preached in its pristine simplicity, purity, and power. Yes, the old gospel of Love. Let us have no more slighting remarks about the religion of Love as weaker than the religion of Law. The religion of Love is stronger for genuine righteousness than the religion of Law. The religion of Law was that of the First Dispensation, which, though glorious, was one of condemnation and death. The religion of Love is that of the New Dispensation, which is one of eternal life in Jesus Christ the Righteous. It is surely time that the foolish talk about Love (such Christian love as is presented to us by Paul and John in the New Testament) being "sentimentalism," or something that is too weak to make righteous men, should cease. Those who talk and write in this manner (especially if they be ministers of the New Testament) show conclusively that they do not thoroughly comprehend the gospel as the strongest power in the universe, as the manifestation of the love of God in Christ to save men from sin, from all sin, from all kinds of sin, and from one of the deepest kinds of sin—covetousness—which is especially the sin of church-members as it was of the Pharisees of old time : because it is a system which denies the power of things supernatural and invisible, and yields perhaps without the seeming transgression of a single outward command of the law, to the power of the selfish and sensual in the world. Covetousness is really one of the profoundest forms of unbelief.

The religion of love, then, as was said at the beginning, can alone bring in "the new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Faith that works by love and purifies the soul, is the life of a righteous man



and of a righteous church. Faith and good works go ever together. They should be preached as one and inseparable under any true system of Christianity. Good works are linked to faith as the body to the soul. As the soul shapes the very form and features, so faith shapes the character. Loving Christ men become like Christ. Loving what is pure men grow pure. Loving what is above the world men grow unworldly and unselfish. Of course this should not be a blind and ignorant love. There should be definite instruction in godliness; and here is seen another positive use of the law under the gospel, that it may become a **Positive instruction in godliness and morality.** positively educational instrumentality, furnishing the standard of right, correcting and rectifying the life. The apostles and primitive preachers of the gospel were careful to give such discriminating instruction in righteousness and all holy living. The conscience even of believers needs to be thoroughly enlightened, disciplined, and educated. The gospel has a moral as well as a spiritual side, though under its system "morals are never separated from spirituals." We think indeed that there should be far more of ethical preaching than there is, more of the principle of Christian love as law applied to life, and to all good works, varying in its application to different ages, circumstances, peoples, temptations, wants, emergencies, but ever one spirit. Building up character in the most holy faith, is one of the duties of the Christian Church and of the Christian preacher. But for ourselves we are entirely satisfied with the old gospel of John, and of James, and of Matthew, and of Peter, and of Paul—the gospel of love—to make men righteous. We see in it the power of God to uproot and destroy all unrighteousness and to build up true honor, and integrity, and holiness, in men's

hearts, whether they be money-changers, bank-directors, rich men, poor men, farmers, soldiers, sailors, scholars, or whatever they may be. We do not desire to substitute in the place of the gospel, which is divine love redeeming and perfecting the soul into the image of Christ, either the legal system of the ancient Jewish Church, grand as it was in its day, or the casuistical system of the modern Roman Catholic Church, astute and saintly as have been many of its teachers. He who follows the "light that lighteth every man" will not go astray. He who loves righteousness as impersonated in Christ need not be taught in all the "ways that are dark" in order to shun the path of the sinner.

" Virtue could see to do what virtue would  
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
Were in the flat sea sunk."

(3.) Christian experience. We need not dwell upon this. Here is an opportunity for meditative and richly subjective preaching. One may follow here the windings of the water of the river of life, that hidden life of God in an individual experience of divine truth, which, taken out of the revealed word, forms the present, working, transforming power of the life of Christ in the soul of each believer.

Need there be any lack of subject-matter in such a wide field as that which has been glanced over? Need invention pause for a moment in discovering new, inspiring, and exhaustless themes for the pulpit?

In what has been said of invention, we have endeavored to show that while the vagaries, unlicensed luxuriance, and unbounded secularization of pulpit themes and of preaching should be much restricted, yet that the field of preaching might really be greatly en-

larged, and rendered at the same time more profound and effective. It would be both more human and more divine. It would be more truly Christian preaching—springing from the divine word, and saturated with the new spirit of Christ—not merely moral, scientific, philosophical, or sentimental. All life, all nature, all human relations, would be thrown open to the transforming power of Christ; the pulpit would be unbound, and responsible for its utterances to God alone; yet it would be devoted simply to the divine will, and to the glory of God in the saving of souls.

Rhetorically speaking, invention, more than anything else, shows the true artist; thus, rhetorically viewed, invention shows the true orator. Cicero makes much of invention in his *De Oratore*, and, highly as he regards the importance of style, he thinks that what an orator has to say, or the methodized subject-matter of discourse, is of far more importance. He divides oratory into five parts: "To invent what you have to say, to arrange what you have invented, to clothe it in proper language, then to commit it to memory, and at last to deliver it with due action and elocution."<sup>1</sup> If Cicero placed invention first, in regard to the mere orator, how much more important is it to the preacher of divine truth.

Cicero's  
view of  
invention  
in rhetoric.

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<sup>1</sup> "De Oratore," B. ii. c. xix.

## THIRD DIVISION.

### STYLE.

#### SEC. 31. *Definition of Style.*

“Style” is a complex term, and, therefore, definitions of style differ, and some of them are quite incomplete ;

**Definition.** for example, Webster’s definition, that style is “the manner of writing with regard to language, or the choice and arrangement of words.” This, however, it must be said, coincides with the ancient idea of style, which had main reference to “the proper selection and arrangement of words.” Webster’s definition, founded upon this ancient one, comprehends simply what we mean by “diction.”

Rhetoric comprehends the subject of style, as being itself the more generic of the two terms ; since rhetoric furnishes the scientific standard of criticism that regulates all the facts and phenomena of style. As invention regards the material, so style regards the expression of that spoken or written language, of which, combined in the form of a continuous discourse, rhetoric takes cognizance.

Professor H. N. Day’s definition of style is “That part of rhetoric which treats of the expression of thought in language. Style is thought formulated in expression. Expression, in fine, has no meaning or significance unless it be the expression of thought, or for the definite pur-



pose of propagating thought." Here the important element of "thought" is added to that of "language" or "diction."

But thought is the very essence and spirit of the man who originates and utters it. It is shaped and colored by the characters of its source—the personality from which it flows. Therefore Vinet goes further still, he says "Diction is not the whole man, while the whole man is the style ;" or, in the familiar phrase of Buffon, "The style is the man."

Evidently, then, style is not merely the language, nor is it merely the verbal expression of thought, but it is the expression of the thinking man through language. We would therefore prefer the following, as, perhaps, a more general and at the same time correct definition : Style is the expression in language of the thought, qualities, and spirit of the man who is discoursing.

From this it would follow that a man who does not express himself—his individual thought and character—in his language, has no "style," properly speaking ; for it is not every piece of composition that has a "style," any more than every building ; and owing to this fact, style, logically viewed, is sometimes defined as "the differential in expression ;" that is to say the recurrence of certain forms of thought and expression springing from the psychological characteristics of the individual, and forming a more or less marked totality of expression, is what we mean by a man's style. It is his own, while at the same time as a writer and speaker he has much in common with all other writers and speakers ; and here is laid the possibility of a science of style, that while it has rhetorical unity as an art it nevertheless deserves to be called style because of these *differentia* that express personal force, sensibility, and character.

It may be seen from this that style is a personal thing belonging very much to character. If a man would improve his style he should improve himself. If he would ennoble his manner of writing and speaking, he must beautify and deepen his own mind so that its expression will be inevitably noble.

Style is sometimes disparaged, and all effort to improve it is scouted. It is true that style (from the very definition we have given) cannot be wholly acquired, but the best part of it is something unconscious and innate. Yet rhetorical training may serve to repress faults and to develop and improve style. It is a common remark that few persons can be found who speak and write equally well, yet the two are not incompatible, and the one ought to aid the other. It certainly is true that to write clearly assists one to think clearly, since the effort to express one's self in the best way is itself a noble mental discipline. Cicero says that "writing is the most excellent modeller and teacher of oratory." Hugh Miller made his own style by hard labor and by constant writing after the model of the best English authors, and his style was one of uncommon beauty. This was also the case to some limited extent with Daniel Webster's style; and it was in some sense the same with the historian William Prescott, from whom we will quote a passage on this very point: "The best, undoubtedly, for every writer, is the form of expression best suited to his peculiar turn of thinking, even at some hazard of violating the conventional tone of the most chaste and careful writers. It is this alone which can give full force to his thoughts. Franklin's style would have borne more ornament—Washington Irving could have done with less—Johnson and Gibbon might have had much less formality, and Hume and Goldsmith could have occasionally pointed their sen-

tences with more effect. But, if they had abandoned the natural suggestions of their genius, and aimed at the contrary, would they not, in mending a hole, as Scott says, have very likely made two? There are certain faults which no writer must commit; false metaphors; solecisms of grammar; unmeaning and tautological expressions; for these contravene the fundamental laws of all writing, the object of which must be to express one's ideas clearly and correctly. But, notwithstanding these limits, the widest latitude should be allowed to taste and to the power of unfolding the thoughts of the writer in all their vividness and originality. Originality—the originality of nature—compensates for a thousand minor blemishes. Of one thing a writer may be sure, if he adopts a manner foreign to his mind he will never please. Johnson says, 'Whoever would write a good style must devote his days and nights to the study of Addison.' Had he done so, or had Addison formed his style on Johnson's, what a ridiculous figure each would have cut! One man's style will no more fit another than one man's coat, or hat, or shoes, will fit another. They will be sure to be too big, or too small, or too something, that will make the wearer of them ill at ease, and probably ridiculous."<sup>1</sup>

We see by this how much Prescott thought of that style which was individual, or the expression of the man himself; he held the great essential of a good style to be that it should be natural, or one's own; and yet, notwithstanding all this, we know what careful study, what unwearied pains, he himself took to obtain a good style. He devoted himself to this one thing for a considerable period of time, and did nothing else. After he had once

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<sup>1</sup> Ticknor's "Life of Prescott."

obtained it then he wrote with a free hand. He said : " I will write *calamo currente*, and not weigh out my words like gold dust ;" and again : " Be not fastidious, especially about phraseology. Do not work for too much euphony. It is lost in the mass. Do not elaborate and *potter* over the style. Think more of general effect ;" and still again he says, " One more conclusion is, that I will not hereafter vex myself with anxious thoughts about my style, having done what I could to arrive at a good style." But he *had made* the necessary effort to arrive at a good style.

Style, according to the definition given, is composed of two elements : first, of something independent of the man himself, and common to all men, viz., language ; and, secondly, of something which depends upon the man himself, and his relations to those things which influence his style ; in other words, there are certain properties of style which are essential, and which chiefly relate to language ; and there are other properties which are originated, or, at least, colored, by the individual thought and mind of the writer, and by all his relations to other minds whom he addresses. These have been called the absolute and the relative properties of style.

Composed  
of two  
elements.

### SEC. 32. *Absolute properties of Style.*

These are properties which enter, and must enter, into all good writing and speaking—into all true style ; and surely here one may profitably spend as much study as he can find time and opportunity to spend. He can always be perfecting himself in this respect. This part of style is an art to be acquired, like any other art ; for it relates more to the external and mechanical dexterity of the writer or speaker than to his inward thought and



genius, which is created rather than acquired ; and yet even this more external character of style also depends largely upon the natural capacities and fitness of the mind. This part of style may all be comprised under the single idea of *language*.

Let us, then, consider language in relation to a discourse, or, according to our original definition of rhetoric, in relation to the spoken address.

We have already remarked upon the general theme of the Study of Language ; we would now look at language more especially in its relations to the best style of public discourse—in a word, of preaching.

This theme can be divided into the oral and the grammatical properties of language.

#### 1. Oral properties of language.

All language is originally intended to be spoken ; it is, properly, *speech*. Even if written, and not spoken, the right principles of articulate sound must be preserved, and must still continue to govern it ; for speech is the ultimate test of language, and it cannot possibly be the best language unless the judgment of the ear is satisfied. A sentence which is not fitted to be read or spoken aloud is not really good language.

Oral properties of language.

The oral properties of language are commonly divided into euphony and harmony.

(1.) Euphony. Euphony, in its relation to style, has regard solely to the effect of sound upon the ear, or, more definitely, of the sound of words upon the ear. It applies chiefly, though not altogether, to single words. Euphony, according to Vinet, is " the combination of agreeable, and the exclusion of disagreeable, sounds in language."

Euphony.

Euphony may be preserved—

(a.) By avoiding words and sentences which cause harsh sounds. These are generally learned and compound words hard to be pronounced, and mostly of Latin, Greek, German, and foreign origin. **Euphony, how preserved.** Dr. Chalmers' writings contain many such words. His phrases and sentences are often difficult to be read aloud, and harsh to the ear, because they bring so many consonants closely together; these are all striving for utterance at once; the organs of speech labor to do their part, and this labor destroys the smoothness and pleasantness of the sounds they produce. One should seek, as a general rule of euphony, for short, radical, easily-spoken words, although many longer Latin words, and those derived from the Italian and French, are exceedingly euphonic. A familiar example of difficult combinations in a sentence from Scripture is the following: "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."

(b.) By avoiding words and sentences which contain a succession of unaccented syllables; such words, for example, as "meteorological," "desultoriness." Our language somewhat lacks in euphony by throwing the accent of some words on the first syllable instead of on the penultimate—in such words as "miserable," "interesting."

(c.) By avoiding long sentences in which many new and varied ideas are introduced. The sound will be disagreeably affected by this; for while the mind is employed in taking in the whole meaning of every part of the sentence, the voice strains and struggles along after it, and thus necessarily grows harsh. One should always give himself time to breathe; the country and the world may be perishing, but the orator, in order to continue to speak with effect, must take breath. Periods, there-

fore, should not be too far apart. We would not condemn long sentences. If well balanced and well composed, they add greatly to the solidity of a composition ; but in relation to euphony of style, of which we now especially speak, if the sentence is long, it should be carefully adapted for speaking, clearly divided and skillfully arranged, so as not to embarrass articulation in the delivery.

(2.) Harmony. Harmony goes farther than euphony, and has regard to sound in its relation to thought. It is not merely phonetic ; it is not merely the production of a sound agreeable to the ear, or the avoidance of a harsh and disagreeable sound ; but it has to do with the rhythmic flow of thought, and is something more deeply emotional and mental. **Harmony.** Original thought usually creates harmony. It does so because it seeks for unity of expression. It arouses that feeling which makes the soul and its powers chord together in one note, and is the true source of harmony. Perhaps we should have said, instead of original thought, a true feeling of the soul, one that is deeper even than thought, or that is the spring of thought : this produces harmony of language. The words of Ruth to Naomi are an harmonious expression of the profoundest feeling : " And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee ; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Now, what is harmony but a real concord or agreement of parts ? And here is a bringing of the soul of Ruth, by a deep purpose of feeling, into agreement with the soul

of Naomi ; there is true harmony between them. It is noticeable how, through the whole passage, the “ thee ” and “ me ” are continually brought into one. It was a perfect surrender of the soul, having nothing left in it of unsubdued, incongruous, or rebellious feeling ; and this inward action of the soul uttered itself in harmonious language, like an accord of music. Harmony of soul thus makes harmony of style, as the expression of devotional feeling, which is the chording of the human with the divine soul, and with the soul of all that is divine in the universe. Harmony of style aids the expression of thought. It flows forth with a rhythmical flow. It is a subtile but deep grace of style, of which the Scriptures are full ; as, for example, the one hundred and third, and one hundred and seventh Psalms, our Lord’s invitation to the weary, and the last chapter of the book of Revelation, and many other passages of profound and majestic harmony.

Prose, it is true, cannot be sung, like poetry, in numbers, but it may, equally with poetry, have something of this rhythmic character, this harmonious flow, which does not arise so much from single words as from a succession of words, or from a sufficient number to express the thought.

We quote upon this subject a few sentences from Cicero : “ Nor is there a single quality, out of many, that more distinguishes a true orator from an unskillful and ignorant speaker than that he who is unpractised pours forth all he can, without discrimination, and measures out the periods of his speech, not with art, but by the power of his breath ; but the orator clothes his thoughts in such a manner as to comprise them in a flow of numbers, at once confined to measure, yet free from restraint ; for, after restricting it to proper modulation



and structure, he gives it an ease and freedom by a variety in the flow, so that the words are neither bound by strict laws, as those of verse, nor yet have such a degree of liberty as to wander without control. There is nothing so pliant, nothing so flexible, nothing which will so easily follow whithersoever you incline to lead it, as language ; according, therefore, as we ourselves are grave, or subtile, or hold a middle course between both, so the form of our language follows the nature of our thoughts, and is changed and varied to suit every method by which we delight the ear or move the passions of mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

These words of Cicero show the close study and attention which the ancients gave to this department of oratory ; they thought that there was in prose a harmony of numbers almost like that in poetry ; that “ the musical management of the voice and the harmonious structure of words should be transferred, as far as the strictness of prose would admit, from poetry to oratory.”

It must be confessed that the ancients were far more exquisite observers than the moderns of the finer powers and application of art, which is, in fact, but a deeper nature.

This idea of harmony of style should not, however, be suffered to degenerate into an attempt at making music, or musical sentences. Cicero evidently aimed at this, sacrificing even strength to attain it. Too much attention to harmony undoubtedly tends to enervate style, and this is a serious temptation to those who have a great native perception of harmony. Such persons should even avoid, in some cases, rather than cultivate this quality. Especially the direct aim at rhythmical writing or speaking in a sermon would be intolerable.

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<sup>1</sup> “ De Oratore,” B. iii. s. xlv.

Yet harmony of style may coexist with strength and energy. Perhaps there is no writer in whose prose style will be found more varied and majestic harmonies which flow from the thought even more than from the words, than Milton ; and certainly there is no stronger, more masculine writer. This too may be also said of Lord Bacon's style, of Edmund Burke's, and that of Robert Hall.

In regard to preaching, there is often a rhythmical movement in the sermon, springing chiefly from the thought, which is both pleasing and powerful, and carries on the mind of the hearer by a strong, resistless flow. Care in little things, choice of words, arrangement of sentences, smoothing of transitions, attention to accents, lengthening or abbreviating phrases, may, indeed, aid in harmony ; but still, true harmony in style comes usually, as we have said, from deeper sources.

## 2. Grammatical properties of language.

This is what De Quincey calls the "mechanology of style." If one great end of education—certainly of classical education—is to speak and write well, to speak and write our own language with purity, we should make ourselves accurately acquainted with the grammar of our own language ; for many of the worst faults of style arise from grammatical incorrectness. Quintilian declares that the orator should by no means look down on the elements of grammar as a small matter, for unless a good foundation in oratory is laid in grammar, the superstructure will surely fall.<sup>1</sup> "Was Cicero," he says, "the less of an orator because, as appears from his letters, he was a rigid exacter, on all occasions, of correct language?"

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<sup>1</sup> "Institut.," B. i. c. 4.

In the "Life of Prescott," the historian, we read, that when he was a young man, he made, once for all, the English grammar his particular study, and gave his whole time and energy to it ; and this may, in part, account for the purity of his style, which Hallam declared to be perfect. For the preacher, idiomatic English (by this is meant a mode of speaking or writing "foreign from the usages of universal grammar and the general laws of language" and restricted to the genius of the English tongue, or expressing its genius, honesty, and character), is a greater conquest than the knowledge of Greek or German. This may be seen in so powerful a preacher as John Bunyan. Richard Grant White, indeed, with some show of reason, calls the English "the grammarless tongue," as being a language almost without etymology and syntax, which are the two great component elements of grammar, and as therefore "untrammelled by grammatical rules and subject only to the laws of reason ;" but still, though much less the subject of rigid structural form than are other more highly inflected languages like the Greek and Latin, it is absurd to say that the English language has no grammar. Its grammar is not indeed the Latin grammar. There are no such inflexible laws of government or agreement in the English language as prevail in the Latin ; but there is nevertheless a positive grammatical standard to the English language, though it is more free, varied, and subtle. The English language has all the parts and all the elements of a perfect language, and these parts are more or less absolutely related to each other ; and thus they carry along with them the necessity of certain forms of grammatical construction, certain definite principles of grammar. At all events, a good English writer should be able to analyze every sentence he writes, word by word. He should be able,

more particularly, to tell the character and derivation of every substantive word, of what it is the subject or the object, its opposition with another, or its independence by address, exclamation, pleonasm, ellipsis ; to tell the quality and name of each adjective, and whether it is used as belonging to something else, or substantively ; to describe every pronoun, and what it refers to and is connected with ; to characterize and inflect every verb, and show clearly, if a finite verb, what it agrees with, or, if an infinitive, what it has for its subject, or, if a participial, what it belongs to ; and in the whole sentence what its use is, and what it depends upon ; to show what every adverb modifies ; what every preposition governs and marks the relation of, and what every conjunction and connective co-ordinates or subordinates ; in fact, to parse the whole sentence, whether simple or complex, and to be able to give both its etymology and syntax. This is really no easy task ; but how else can a man know for himself if he writes correctly ? One should therefore attend to—

(1.) Grammatical analysis, so far as to be able to detect common errors in construction. Many of these

**Grammatical analysis.** might profitably be mentioned ; but we will not enter into these, which form so

portentous an array ; we will refer the student to any good English grammar. These grammatical errors relate chiefly to the improper use of verbal cases and tenses ; the use or omission of the article ; the use or omission of the negative ; the employment of useless intensives, to which American writers greatly tend ; the mixing of the numbers and cases of pronouns (“ the management of pronouns,” says Mr. Moon, “ is the test of a scholar’s mastery over language” ) ; the improper or superfluous use of preposi-



tions ; the awkward use of conjunctives ; the false use of and the use of false adverbs ; the wrong agreement of words in sentences ; the improper collocation of words ; the making of weak and loose sentences through the too great separation of their connected parts, or what Dr. Campbell calls " a constructive ambiguity ;" the use of sentences whose members are imperfect. There may be, it is true, an over-precision of style, which is almost as bad as carelessness ; but the present tendency is not in that direction ; and what we, as preachers, should aim at, is correct, plain, idiomatic English. One should also attend to—

(2.) Particular words and phrases which are common violations of grammatical correctness, or, at least, of elegant usage. It is well for a preacher to keep a list of these, to which he is continually adding ; and that will serve him as a reminder, as well as an aid, in his endeavor after grammatical correctness of style. " Literature, if it is to flourish, must have a standard of taste to build up, which shall expand to meet new forms of excellence, but which shall preserve that which is excellent in old forms, and shall serve as a guide to the rejection of whatever is bad, pretentious, and artificial ; and it is the business of critics to see that this standard is built up and maintained."

**Words and phrases which are violations of grammatical correctness.**

### SEC. 33. *Relative properties of Style.*

The related properties of style are something more than language in the abstract, and comprehend all those relations to the mind and condition, both of the speaker and hearer, which affect style. They refer to style in the concrete, to the style of the individual who is speaking,

and also of his speaking upon a certain subject, for a certain object, and to a certain class of hearers. The speaker's individuality and personality are now infused into the style, and color it.

**Subjective qualities.** 1. *Subjective qualities*; as depending upon the speaker himself, or having relation chiefly to his own thought.

These are appropriate thought, consecutive thought, and individuality of style or thought.

(1.) Appropriate thought. There should be in every true discourse not only thought, but thought appropriate to the subject and the occasion. One who attempts to write or speak for the public should not write or speak merely for the sake of doing so, without an express aim or purpose.

**Appropriate thought.** The beauty of the style of the ancient classic writers is, according to John Stuart Mill, that it is so highly significant; that there are no words or phrases which are meaningless; that there is little writing, apparently, for the mere sake of writing; but all has some genuine meaning, some definite, if not always true, sense. This *realness* of style makes the chief strength and beauty of classical writings. Whately, on the contrary, seems to give something like this advice—that one should learn facility in mere word-making, without (as far as rhetoric is concerned) caring so much for the thought. But such advice should be received with caution, for it indicates, we think, an inadequate conception of the theory of rhetoric. Substantial and appropriate thought is the foundation of every true discourse. Demosthenes never dared to appeal to the feelings of his audience, or to urge them to any policy or action, without first presenting a solid argument for his views. The body of his orations is composed of substantial reasoning; the laying down of

principles and facts ; appealing to sound sense, and appropriate to the subject and occasion. Such a process has not only a value in developing the subject itself, but it also develops the man ; it shows the treasures of his mind and thought. This serves to create confidence in the correctness of his conclusions. And when the conclusion is urged upon the heart and conscience of the audience, they are prepared for it. The force of the speaker's thought has moulded their thought into an image of his own. No man can begin to be eloquent till he has been sensible, till he has, so to speak, built his fort of solid masonry to fire from. "High nonsense," as some one calls it, cannot be eloquent. No facility of speech, no word-making, can ever supply the place of substantial and appropriate thought. Eloquence, in its widest sense, is, first, subjectively, the native power of thought, and, objectively, the art of using this so that it shall attain a certain worthy and definite end. Appropriate thought is, above all, reasonable thought. A speaker should have some real truth to communicate, and should do it in words that convey some real thought to the mind. This is sometimes called "significance" in style. It is hardly needful to dwell upon the point that in a sermon there should be nothing contrary to good sense. Reasonable thinking is an essential quality of a sermon. This does not admit of anything puerile, frivolous, merely marvellous, or vainly pedantic. It does not admit of spending the precious hour of preaching in trifles or insignificant discussions. "As a speaker of the word," Carlyle says, "he will speak real words ; no idle jargon or hollow triviality will come from him."

There may be much that is plain and commonplace in a sermon ; much that has been said before ; much that

does not demand a great amount of thought to invent or to assent to ; much, even, that is "goodish" rather than good ; and yet the reasonable quality of the sermon need not be destroyed or compromised ; the bread, if not the finest of the wheat, is still nourishing food to many minds ; but this is not saying, that, under any circumstances, what is absolutely unsound or nonsensical can be allowed. All things must come to the test of *common sense*, which is the sense that everywhere prevails, and is established among sound-minded men.

(2.) Consecutive thought. There should not only be thought, and appropriate thought, but orderly thought—a rational succession of ideas—the avoidance of scattering, fragmentary, and disconnected thoughts. Whatever has any pretence to a regular discourse demands, at least, that quality ; and this is not denying that there may be, at times, bold and apparently unconnected thoughts, left standing by themselves, like big boulders in a landscape, not nicely fitted into the frame of the discourse, and giving energy and picturesqueness to style, breaking up a dull monotony. But there should be, nevertheless, either a natural or a logical progress of ideas—one sentence making addition to another, one paragraph being developed from the thought or statement contained in the preceding paragraph, one division forming an advance to the next.

There should be a movement in the discourse, or it should be thought in motion, increasing in volume like a river, every word, sentence, paragraph, division, preparing for what follows, and all forming a united, living current of thought. Short, broken sentences ; long and circuitous parentheses, where the idea, or another than the main idea, is carried off into numberless ramifications ; practical thoughts interspersed too freely in pure argu-



mentation ; inconsequential and casual remarks—these break the onward current, which should not for a moment stagnate, and which should move, even if it moves slowly. A spoken discourse is not like a scientific disquisition, which may be a deep pool of contemplation, rather than a fluent stream of thought ; but a sermon should introduce thoughts in their natural sequence, and should move on to some definite end. Care should be taken in a sermon to bind it together, not only by consecutiveness of thought, but by every mechanical help afforded by the connections of the language and the structure of sentences. It is not well to employ very short sentences, or a highly sententious style ; they are more fitted to the neat moral essay than the sacred discourse that lays before us the inexhaustible riches of divine truth.

(3.) Individuality of thought and style. We have spoken of this in another connection. It is that quality in which the *man* appears in a style that is perfectly natural to him. It is a noble quality. It is refreshing to hear a man's own ideas spoken in his own way. The effect produced is always greater when there is a sense of personal address, springing from the speaker's own mind and feelings, rather than from the thought and impulse of another mind. We do not wish to hear Chalmers from any but Chalmers. We wish to feel that we are taken into the confidence of the speaker, and that we are listening to the actual utterances of his heart. We may be dazzled by the artificial speaker, but he cannot move us as that man can, who, with a higher earnestness of purpose, shows us himself, opens to us his confidence, utters thoughts which he has wrought by the toil of his own mind. One may increase his individuality of style,

**Individuality  
of thought  
and style.**

1. By aiming at independent thought. He may not aim at originality, but he should aim at saying what he truly thinks. We call Thomas Fuller an original writer, but his originality does not consist in his saying things in an odd way, but in his strong, independent thinking. The very subject of the thought is his own, as well as the language in which it is expressed. There is no mistaking the characteristic individuality of his style. A fresh thought of one's own, even if he is not what is called a man of genius; is worth ten of another's, to give him power as a speaker. One may increase his individuality of style, 2. By employing the more direct personal address—by not talking to the world, or men in general, but to men before him. It is one man talking to another, and not discoursing about indifferent things. Let there be never so profound a course of thought in a sermon, yet the audience should be made to feel that it is addressed to them—to each of them.

Small things sometimes aid this. Luther liked “thees and thous” in a sermon. The use of the pronoun “you” may give the sermon all the point needed. The individualizing, sometimes, of a member of the audience as “my brother” does this. A sudden grasp laid upon some particular conscience, an allusion to some recent and real event, some common affliction or bereavement, something which brings the thought into the present—this helps individuality of style. Of course this directness of address should not be overdone, for personalities in the pulpit are outrageous. But one need not be too much afraid of hurting people's feelings by a friendly and manly directness of address; for the habit of applying unpleasant truth to our neighbors, instead of to ourselves, is of familiar occurrence.

A preacher becomes more individual in style who has

an individual in view ; for this necessarily narrows and shapes his thought, and gives it a personal directness. The eye, the finger, the whole manner, should aid in lending life and point to speech. Modern sermons lack point, and hence individuality of style. The essay style scrupulously avoids directness ; and in the essay style this is a great beauty. One may increase his individuality of style, 3. By preaching specific truth. Generalities may arouse the mind, but particulars search the heart. A single apt fact is more forcible than the most eloquent deduction. Where thus specifically preached, the truth acquires an edge ; it becomes indeed like " any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

SEC. 34. *Objective qualities* ; as depending upon the speaker, but having more particular reference to their effect on the hearer or the audience addressed.

This second department of the relative properties of style, which, though it has also much to do with the speaker himself and with his character, has peculiar reference to its effect upon the mind addressed, and which is mainly objective in its nature, has been differently classified by different writers upon rhetoric. Thus Quintilian says that all language has three kinds of excellence—to be correct, perspicuous, elegant.<sup>1</sup> Whately sums up these objective qualities of style under the heads of perspicuity, energy, and elegance ; Dr. Shedd into plainness, force, and beauty ; Professor H. N. Day considers them to be comprised in the properties of

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<sup>1</sup> " Institut., " B. i. ch. v., 1.

clearness, energy, and beauty ; Vinet has a wider classification into the qualities of perspicuity, purity, propriety, precision, rapidity, proportion, order, popularity, familiarity, nobleness, gravity, etc. Evidently, some of these last-mentioned kinds mean the same thing in a greater or less degree of development ; and all of them, perhaps, might be combined in the two simple qualities of strength and beauty.

We would make a somewhat wider classification than that of Whately, though less extended than that of Vinet ; and we would treat especially of the  
**Classification.** qualities of Purity, Propriety, Precision, Perspicuity, Energy, Elegance.

(I.) Purity. Purity of style is that quality which does not violate any of the true principles of language,  
 in respect of form, construction, or meaning.  
**Purity.**

Purity, and the other qualities of style which we shall mention, belong, it is true, in some sense, to those fundamental and invariable qualities which relate to language ; but they have also intimate relations to the audience addressed, and the effect upon them. An Athenian audience, we are told, could detect, and would hiss a wrong accent, a mispronunciation, or a barbarism. A preacher who violates purity of style may, in like manner, in these modern days, lose power with intelligent and educated hearers, and, more or less, with all. The preacher of the pure truth of Christianity should aim at a pure style ; and this remark might even be extended to the general truth or purity of the subject-matter discussed—that the great laws of true thinking and of truth should not be violated. It is true that language is a growth, and that it cannot be constrained rigidly by laws which necessity and usage are sure to disregard. But there are certain sound



principles of language, and there should be some standard of good language to which even usage should pay reasonable deference, else there could be no improvement in language, and bad usage as well as good usage would prevail. Words and phrases springing from disreputable quarters, from vulgar sources, from loose colloquial intercourse, from a careless literature, and even from private pedantry and assumption, these should be steadily resisted. The laws of right reason and sound philosophy in language should be firmly maintained, while at the same time the true genius and spirit of the language should have free play given to it ; the writer or preacher should aim at the most vigorous use of idiomatic English without fear of the carpings of the critic before his eyes. But more precisely viewed, purity of style forbids, (*a.*) The needless introduction of new words into the language. Augustus Cæsar declared himself unable to introduce a new word into the Latin lan-

**Purity  
of style, how  
violated.**

guage. It is an immense assumption to coin a word ; but few can do this. A discoverer may invent a new word for his discovery ; a master in any science may coin a word when the progress of science demands it ; writers of established eminence may sometimes modestly propose new words, merely by way of suggestion. New words made by compounding old ones form also a violation of this principle. Our language has not the fatal facility of the German in creating compound words. (*b.*) Introduction of foreign words. There is a great danger in introducing German words and idioms into our preaching and theological literature. The careful use of English words and English idioms is one of the first qualities of purity. Americans, as a nation, are peculiarly imitative and assimilative ; we take all ele-

ments of nationality into our wide civilization (*colluvio omnium gentium*) ; there should be, therefore, while we are an English-speaking nation, a stricter watch kept against the corruption of the language from these foreign sources. The habit of introducing French words and phrases by half-educated and perhaps travelled people is a weakness that should be resisted. There is a pithy passage which we will quote from the writings of a very old English author of the time of Edward VI. (Sir John Cheke), which is interesting from the fact that this author himself in his day exerted considerable influence in preventing the inroad of foreign words into the language, when the current was strong that way ; and it also shows how early a jealousy was awakened for the preservation of the purity of our tongue. He says, " Among other lessons, this should first be learned, that we never affect any strange inkhorn terms, but to speak as is commonly received ; neither seeking to be overfine, nor yet living over careless ; using our speech as most men do, and ordering our wits as the fewest have done. Some seek so far for outlandish English that they forget altogether their mother language. And I dare swear this : if some of their mothers were alive, they were not able to tell what they say ; and yet these fine English clerks will say they speak their mother tongue, if a man should charge them with counterfeiting the king's English. Some far journeyed gentlemen, at their return home, like as they love to go in foreign apparel, so they will ponder their talk with over-sea language. He that cometh lately out of France will talk French-English, and never blush at the matter. Another chops in with English Italianated, and applieth the Italian phrase to our English speaking. The unlearned, or foolish-fantastical that smells but of learning (such fellows as have seen learned men in

their day), will so Latin their tongues that the simple cannot but wonder at their talk, and think surely they speak by some revelation. I know them that think rhetoric to stand wholly upon dark words; and he that can catch an inkhorn term by the tail, him they account to be a fine Englishman and a good rhetorician." (c.) Introduction of obsolete words. Such words as "hap," "haply," "meeten'," "awearry," "methinks," "be-hoove," and many words that may be used in poetry are not fitted for prose. The constant use of the Bible by ministers may sometimes lead imperceptibly to the use of archaisms. (d.) Introduction of cant and slang words. A homely, strong, common word, or phrase, is often effective—in some audiences the occasional introduction of such is almost imperative—but a decidedly cant expression—religious cant the worst of all—is not to be defended. "*Cant* is a phraseology composed of genuine words soberly used by some sect, profession, or sort of men, in one legitimate sense, which they adopt to the exclusion of others, as having peculiar virtue, and which thereby becomes peculiar to themselves. Cant is more or less enduring, its use continuing, with no variation of meaning, through generations. *Slang* is a vocabulary of genuine words or unmeaning jargon, used always with an arbitrary and conventional signification, and generally with humorous intent. It is mostly coarse, low, and foolish, although in some cases, owing to circumstances of the time, it is racy, pungent, and pregnant of meaning. Slang, as distinguished from cant, is very evanescent. It generally passes out of use and out of mind in the course of a few years, and often in a few months." <sup>1</sup> It might be added to this description, that though every

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Grant White's "Words and their Uses," p. 85.

profession has its cant phrases, as the legal, which talks of the "said" and the "aforesaid;" of the medical, which characterizes diseases as "affections;" the clerical profession, and the whole sphere of ecclesiastical and religious life particularly abound in cant phraseology, in such words and phrases as, for example, "love of souls," "to be serious" for "to be thoughtful" in religious things, "to be stupid" for "to be indifferent," "professor" for "member of the church," "worms of the dust," "wilderness-world," "vale of tears," "solemnize our minds," etc. The frequent use of "heart," and "our hearts," in a peculiar sense, and the constant repetition of the Lord's name in prayer, "O Lord," or "O God"—such expressions should as much as possible be avoided, and, above all, those pious expressions in which there is no moral or religious sincerity, which is the worst of all cant, which not only violates good taste but good morals. There may be indeed technical words belonging to every business and art, but words that are not good English in other relations, and that convey to those outside of the particular circle of the persons who use them no definite or right idea, these are violations of purity. Pericles, it is said, never ascended the bema without the prayer that no unfit word might fall from his lips; and should the preacher of divine truth be less careful? Both cant and slang attract only a low class of minds, since impurities of style are allied to impurities of thought; and we prefer to see coarseness anywhere rather than in the minister of Christ. The use of profane words, though employed only as illustrations, or quotations, is to be shunned; and there may be too much made even of the excellent idea that the language of the pulpit should be common language; it certainly should be plain, but not too familiar, not too low,



certainly never vulgar. People go to church expecting something a little higher, in point of carefulness and dignity of expression, than slipshod and every-day speech. Sacred themes demand, to a certain degree, elevated language. What little life or power is momentarily secured by the use of low words or phrases soon passes away ; while of other things more is lost than gained. (*e.*) Introduction of solecisms. Solecisms usually apply more to phrases than words ; and they are words and phrases used in unwonted and unjustifiable senses. Jonathan Edwards' peculiar philosophical use of the word " necessity " has occasioned perplexity in theological science. (*f.*) Introduction of barbarisms. There are words and terms that are really not English, and are totally contrary to English usage and idiom. (*g.*) Introduction of words or thoughts which violate manly simplicity and good taste. The giving way to loose images, or to a luxuriant fancy, or to an overwrought and unnatural intensity of expression, or to fantastic efforts to write more finely and impressively than good sense dictates, destroys purity of style. This fault may be indicated, rather than fully described.

We should strive for purity of style, because a pure language associates us with our English ancestors, and with Chatham, Milton, Hampden, Spenser, Bacon, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Wyclif, and, above all, with the English Bible ; and it associates us, also, with the great statesmen, poets, writers, and preachers who speak the English language now. It contributes, likewise, to the permanence of a man's usefulness, especially of a minister's, who would speak through his pen. If a man has not a pure style of writing, his thoughts, however excellent, will not float his style ; for purity of style is the beginning and indispensable accompaniment of every

other literary excellence ; it is essential to precision, elegance, vigor. And the care to preserve purity of style is the great safeguard to the constant tendency to debasement in language. In our country, where there is no acknowledged standard of language, where there is great difference of custom, variety of races, and an unrestrained freedom of expression, it should be particularly borne in mind by ministers that they, as educated men, are the guardians of the purity of our tongue, and that there is a moral responsibility connected with their being so.

Purity of style may be preserved—

(a.) By care to avoid at all times the use of ungrammatical, superfluous, and idle expressions. Above all,

**How purity  
of style may  
be preserved.**

this should be observed in common conversation. Conversation is a fine art. One should study it. It is a great means of influence to a minister. To be free and spontaneous in conversation, and at the same time to speak pure English, and to retain the best form of expression, is a noble accomplishment. Some ministers wield a greater influence by their conversation than by their preaching ; for they are some other persons in preaching, but in conversation they are themselves. While, then, avoiding pedantry and stiff precision, let one strive to use the purest and most select English in all that he says. Let him make sparing use of contractions. Let him not allow a low or slang word to slip out ; for the expressions one is accustomed to use in conversation will surely show themselves in the pulpit, especially in extemporaneous discourse.

He who is in the habit of strewing along his conversation such words as “orate,” “donate,” “posted,” “booked up,” “dead-headed,” “enthused ;” or “balance” for “remainder ;” or “a party” for “a person ;”

or "calculate" for "expect;" or "guess" for "suppose;" or "inaugurate" for something very small indeed, as "to inaugurate a debating society or an eating club;" or "deputize" for "depute," or "fix" for "arrange" and "manage," or "lit" for "lighted," or "unbeknown," or "hadn't ought," or "first-rate," and a hundred such words and phrases, the most of which are American products, and not good ones at that—a man who uses such loose words and phrases habitually in his talk, cannot deliver an off-hand address without betraying by his language, either his want of education or his want of refinement; for a refined man is shown in his conversation more quickly than in any other way. Burnet, in the "History of His Own Time," says of Leighton, "In a free and frequent conversation with him for twenty-two years I never heard him utter an idle word, or a word that had not a direct tendency to edification."

(*b.*) By close familiarity with a few of the purest English authors. Let one study the style of Herbert's prose, of Goldsmith, Addison, De Foe, Izaak Walton, Thomas Hooker, Robert Southey, Wordsworth, Jeffrey, Hallam, Washington Irving, and William Prescott; and the reverse is also true, viz., a cautious reading (so far as regards their style) of authors of doubtful purity, such as Carlyle and Coleridge's prose.

(*c.*) By the study of English lexicography. Of a good dictionary one might say, "Turn it day and night." In the use of dictionaries, however, it should be remembered that our most popular modern dictionaries are not only dictionaries of the English language, but encyclopædias, compendiums of myriads of words that are not pure English; in fact, of all words that have been used by English writers.

(*d.*) By the use of rhetorical criticism, not only of

others, but of one's own. One should never use a doubtful word without examination ; let him try himself more unsparingly than any one else. If one would not wish to wear a dirty, ragged, and unbecoming coat in the public street, why should he not take pains to make his words fit his thoughts neatly, and set them off fairly, so that his mind may make its best appearance in public ?

(e.) By the critical study of ancient classic models. We must go to the Greek for form, as we do to the Latin for dignity of style. Were there room, we would quote on this point the whole of a remarkable letter of Lord Brougham to Zachary Macaulay, giving him advice in regard to the rhetorical training of his son, Thomas Babington, bearing date, " Newcastle, March 10th, 1823 ;" but we must content ourselves with a few of the closing paragraphs : " If he would be a great orator, he must go at once to the fountain-head, and be familiar with every one of the great orations of Demosthenes. I take for granted that he knows those of Cicero by heart ; they are very beautiful, but not very useful, except, perhaps, the *Pro Milone*, *Pro Ligario*, and one or two more ; but the Greek must positively be the model ; and merely reading it, as boys do, to know the language, won't do at all ; he must enter into the spirit of each speech, thoroughly know the positions of the parties, follow each turn of the argument, and make the absolutely perfect and most chaste and severe composition familiar to his mind. His taste will improve every time he reads and repeats to himself (for he should have the fine passages by heart), and he will learn how much may be done by a skillful use of a few words, and a rigorous rejection of all superfluities. In this view, I hold a familiar knowledge of Dante to be next to Demosthenes. It is in vain to say that imitations of these models won't do for our times.



First, I do not counsel any imitation, but only an imbibing of the same spirit. Secondly, I know from experience that nothing is half so successful in these times (bad though they be) as what has been formed on the Greek models. I use a very poor instance in giving my own experience ; but I do assure you that, both in courts of law and Parliament, and even to mobs, I have never made so much play (to use a very modern phrase) as when I was almost translating from the Greek. I composed the peroration of my speech for the queen, in the Lords, after reading and repeating Demosthenes for three or four weeks ; and I composed it twenty times over at least ; and it certainly succeeded, in a very extraordinary degree, and far above any merits of its own. This leads me to remark that though speaking, with writing beforehand, is very well until the habit of easy speech is acquired, yet after that he can never write too much ; this is quite clear. It is laborious, no doubt, and it is more difficult, beyond comparison, than speaking off-hand ; but it is necessary to perfect oratory, and, at any rate, it is necessary to acquire the habit of correct diction. But I go further, and say, even to the end of a man's life he must prepare, word for word, most of his finer passages. Now, would he be a great orator, or no ? In other words, would he have almost absolute power of doing good to mankind, in a free country, or no ? So he wills this, he must follow these rules."

(2.) Propriety. This is so nearly related to purity on the one hand, and to precision on the other, that we need not dwell upon it. Propriety is the employment of words according to the best usage, **Propriety.** in a becoming way, and not in some false, unusual, and improper manner. Dean Swift's definition of style is one chiefly of this quality of propriety, viz., " the right words

in the right places." Bruyère, quoted by Vinet, says, "Among all the different expressions which may render one and the same thought, only one is good ; we do not always fall in with it in speaking or in writing. It nevertheless exists, and every other except that is feeble ; and a man of mind, who wishes to be understood, can be satisfied only with that." The just expression is the forcible one ; it is the expression that exactly fits the idea, whereas no other expression does exactly suit the idea. Southey says, " The readiest and plainest style is the most forcible, and in all ordinary cases, the word which first presents itself is the best ;" and Swift in the same strain remarks, " When a man's thoughts are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first, and his own judgment will direct him in what order to place them, so that they may be best understood." An impropriety of style is committed, not only when good English words, or words proper enough in themselves, do not make good sense, because they are employed out of place, or in some unusual manner ; but even when they are used loosely, carelessly, confusedly, and, as has been said, so as to leave some gap between the expression and the thought. The best writers are distinguished for their thoughtful yet easy propriety of language, their aptness of expression. Their thought and language are identical. Our great military leader, General Sherman, does not probably pride himself on his many accomplishments, but he nevertheless uses words with wonderful fitness and he writes as if with the point of his sword.

3.) Precision. Precision in style, as applied to the language of a discourse, is that quality by which the writer's idea is exactly expressed more and no less : as applied to the subject of a

discourse, it is that quality which prevents one from saying anything superfluous, or not saying enough to convey the perfect idea. Propriety is fitness of language; precision is exactness of language. Precision requires that the thought be accurately expressed; that it be completely brought out, but without unnecessary words, without slovenliness of expression. It is an important quality in giving strength and rapid movement to style.

Accuracy is, indeed, one of the fundamental qualities of style, and it is the result of accurate and well-trained habits of mind. Precision may be violated—

(a.) By want of a nice perception of the essential differences of words. As there are a great many words nearly similar, but not the same, the precise writer is shown by his clearly marking those shades

**How violated.**

of difference. There are, in point of fact, but few if any absolute synonyms in the language. Words may be similar and they may be used to explain similar things, but they are not precisely the same; and an accurate writer, in contrast with a loose writer, is shown in his fine perception of such differentiating qualities. He will not use as precisely the same terms such similar words as "sentence" and "condemnation," "egotism" and "egoism," "decided" and "decisive," "continual" and "continuous," "atonement" and "redemption," "regeneration" and "conversion," "mercy" and "grace," "charity" and "benevolence," "soul" and "spirit," "immortality" and "eternal life." "Custom" is not exactly "habit;" "disseminate" is different from "separate;" "only" is not the same as "alone," though so often used as convertible terms. The word "answer" is more colloquial than "reply;" "begin" is more familiar than "commence;" "commence" requires a verbal noun after it, "commencement."

as "begin" can take the infinitive instead. "The man began to sing" and "the man commenced singing" are right uses. A precise writer would say "the day has ended," not "the day has finished." He would say, however, "I have finished my book," not "I have ended my book." "Finish" refers to the result produced by personal effort, but "end" is better applied to impersonal subjects.

(b.) By a deficiency of words. We may use too few as well as too many words for precision; and this is an especial source of obscurity in writers who habitually use a condensed style. We must sometimes repeat words, to be accurate. The omission of words needed to complete a sentence is a common fault, the writers thinking that their meaning is sufficiently clear; but often the longer the circuit made, and the more words employed, the more time is saved, and the clearer the thought is brought out.

"Precision" is "cutting before"—"making accurate limits;" and while it tends to conciseness, it is still not precisely conciseness, which is rather "cutting short," or "cutting off." "Conciseness," says Vinet, "is distinguished by an economy of words greater than the object of precision requires; for precision only suppresses what is decidedly superfluous, and would spare the mind a fatigue, that which springs from the necessity which an author puts upon us of condensing the thought, or reducing it to a few elements. Conciseness, stopping short of what is necessary to complete expression, is not designed, doubtless, to fatigue the mind, but it gives it labor, and thus it enters into the category of those processes or figures of which we have before spoken. It is a *lip-sis*, not of words, but of thoughts. Taking it as *lip-sis*, or, at least, as a particular force of style, it can



hardly constitute the form of an entire composition, especially that of a sermon. It is too apt to produce obscurity ; it approaches to affectation and the epigrammatic style. It is often but the false semblance of precision, and nothing is easier than to have at the same time much conciseness and very little precision ; for it is possible to be at the same time parsimonious and prodigal, and, with all this affectation of strictness, to leave only vague ideas in the mind of the reader or hearer.”<sup>1</sup>

(c.) By a verbal diffuseness. Precision is also sometimes lost in too great expansion, as well as condensation of style. When too many words are used, when the texture of the style wants fibre, when it is loose and diffuse, the language is no longer an instrument of expressing accurate thought. Writers who have an easy command of words, a native facility of expression, are greatly tempted to accumulate words about the thought, so as to hide or overload it. Even so brilliant a writer as De Quincey errs in this way. Such a style is especially faulty in a sermon. What may be called a learned diffuseness, entering wearisomely into the exposition of what may be, after all, secondary matters—is particularly out of place in a discourse that is to operate directly on the conscience and the will. Precision of style is especially opposed to needless repetitions, pleonasms, and expressions that add nothing to the thought. There may be, at times, a certain rhetorical redundancy which is the genuine expression of eloquent feeling, a heaping up of epithets in the warmth of onwading discourse, which looks like careless profusion ; but this should not be prolixity. An idea should not lose itself in a vague sea of words. There cannot be much exp

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<sup>1</sup> “ Homiletics,” p. 382.

sion in earnest oratory ; it must sweep on to the end. Perhaps there is no one thing in which young writers, and we may say preachers, so often fail as in condensation.

(*d.*) By disregarding the distinction between the literal and the figurative use of words. The accurate use of religious and theological terms which are founded upon figures of speech, and of the metaphorical etymology of important words, such as "righteousness," "depravity," "virtue," "holiness," etc., would be desirable ; and generally the figurative language of Scripture should be used with accuracy. This language has a meaning, and often a more intense meaning than literal language can express ; and it may be so profoundly true that common language breaks down with the weight of the thought or the truth to be conveyed, and it seeks the figurative form, the wings of the imagination, to bear it up. Nevertheless, figurative language, even if it occur in Scripture, should not be used as if it were the language of prosaic literalness, or cold, logical statement.

(*e.*) By want of precision of thought. This is, doubtless, the chief source of want of precision of style. Vague expression often gets the credit of profound thought ; but more often it is vague because the thinking is not accurate or profound. There is a great temptation for a writer or speaker to express a half idea before he has thought it through, or detached it cleanly from all other ideas. Loose thinking and loose writing go together.

It is almost unnecessary to point out the great benefits of precision of style. It conduces to the vigor of the mental habits ; it promotes clearness and cleanness of thought ; every idea is carefully separated from every other idea ; nothing extraneous is left clinging to it ; the mind acquires almost the force and condensation of

proverbs. We see this sometimes in Coleridge, notwithstanding his marked faults of style in other respects. "Men should be weighed, not counted." "The most deceitful are the most suspectful." Such precise, weighty phrases now and then occur between his long and obscure sentences, like lumps of shining gold.

There is nothing that the popular mind so delights in as in this quality of precision, for it sees in the speaker a power which it does not itself possess. Precision, too, marks the difference between a true and a spurious style. A true style has genuine ideas, and expresses them so that they cannot be misunderstood; whereas a mock style has no true ideas, and makes up the deficiency in vague and grandiloquent phrases. In religious discourse this stilted and false style is particularly hurtful. Better have the simplest and most common thoughts, clearly expressed, than what Carlyle calls "phosphorescent punk and nothingness." Precision is peculiarly the style of science, but it need not for that reason be a learned, nor, above all, a pedantic, style.

The means of acquiring precision of style are, briefly, (a.) Think precisely. Bishop Butler, in the preface to his "Sermons," says, "Confusion and per-

Means  
of acquiring  
precision.

plexity are, in writing, indeed without excuse, because any one may, if he pleases, know whether he understands or sees through what he is about; and it is unpardonable in a man to lay his thoughts before others when he is conscious that he himself does not know whereabouts he is, or how the matter before him stands. It is coming abroad in order, which he ought to be dissatisfied to find himself at home." (b.) Think on abstruse subjects. Next then the mettle of the mind should be tried on the difficult themes; and one should not always choo-

themes, or treat any theme easily. (*c.*) Make use of precise language in ordinary conversation and writing. Select the best synonym or equivalent word. We may experience a sense of great poverty of language at first; but language is a special study, and the constant use of a good book of synonyms may aid us. (*d.*) Study the style of Bishop Hall, Lord Jeffrey, Archbishop Whately, and, in many respects, Robert South, who used language accurately, and made close discriminations, except when in a passion. The language, also, of some of the best scientific writers of the day, such as Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, and Faraday, is worthy of study, in respect of its exact and luminous qualities.

Precision of style should not degenerate into stiffness or pedantry, and thus spoil the ease and flow of nature. Harms, quoted by Tholuck, says, "Let the preacher speak negligently and incorrectly." It is better to do even that than to lose all life and freedom in an over-fastidious attention to precise correctness of language; so that, perhaps, what Cicero calls "a diligent negligence" one which unites correctness with freedom—will best describe the true style. It has been said of John Henry Newman's style, which is almost a perfect model in some respects of a strong and yet flexible pulpit style: "The free, unconstrained movement of Dr. Newman's style tells any one who knows what writing is, of a very keen and exact knowledge of the subtle and refined secrets of language. With that uncared-for play and simplicity here was a fulness, richness, a curious delicate music, quite instinctive and unsought for, withal precision and sureness of expression." He thus united the two seemingly opposing elements of precision and freedom, and moves with the grace and strength of both combined.

(4.) Perspicuity. This is "something which can be



looked through" like glass ; it is that quality which enables the hearer to comprehend at once, to see through, the idea intended to be conveyed. It strives to make the thought perfectly intelligible to the hearer's mind, to make him as conscious of it as is the speaker himself, so that he may see it with vivid distinctness. This, it will be allowed by all, is an essential property in a sermon, since no one is apt to be influenced by a truth which he does not understand. Its opposite is obscurity and ambiguity. It is considered by Vinet to be the first quality of style—an opinion founded on reason, and with which agree the words of Quintilian, "*Nobis prima sit virtus perspicuitas.*" It is not the only quality of style, but it certainly is the foundation of all. Perspicuity may be violated—

(a.) In relation to the idea itself. It may not be a true, a rational idea, although at first sight seeming to be one ; or it may be a true idea obscurely expressed ; or it may be a truly profound idea, difficult to be expressed and comprehended from its real depth. It has been pronounced the greatest effort of genius to make abstract ideas plain. The preacher should not strive to be so plain as to become insipid ; and there is often obscurity in the truth itself, for mystery is a source of power. A stream may be very clear and very shallow. Thus it is that the preacher of the infinite truths of the gospel cannot always make himself understood by every one in his congregation, though that certainly should be his aim. He should study his congregation in that respect, and should strive to put himself in the place of his hearer. His style should be "just high enough to raise his audience, and just low enough to reach them."

How violated  
in relation  
to the idea.

(b.) In relation to the language in which the idea is

conveyed. This may refer to other things, as to the grammatical confusion in the construction of sentences, or to the use of words which do not express the exact sense ; but generally it refers to the distinction between figurative and literal language, the neglect of which, as has been suggested in another relation, is one of the most fruitful sources of obscurity. True imagery, discreetly employed, may be made the means of clearness of style, for the imagination is an illumining power, and the ability to use appropriate imagery in the pulpit is often the ability to flash light into the obscurest depths of a theme. It is the imagination playing in upon the argument, or the imagination coming with her torch to help the reason in the search for truth ; but the imagination may, through a confusion of images, destroy perspicuity. It breaks, as it were, the mirror at which we look into many fragments, giving back only confusing reflections.

The means of attaining perspicuity of style are—

(a.) A careful attention to the use of single words. Connectives, or the words which form the mechanical structure of a sentence, should be short, plain words. The proper use of adverbs and pronouns, in relation to the words they agree with, is to be carefully attended to ; for the little words contribute more to perspicuity than the larger ; they are, as it were, the pins and joints which bind a sentence together, or on which it turns and moves. Here care should be bestowed. Words also with a plurality of meanings should be used only in such connections as to exclude all but the meaning intended. Words which have two or more senses should be so carefully used as to avoid ambiguous meanings. In like manner the same word should not be used, at a short interval

**In relation  
to the  
language.**

**Means  
of attaining  
perspicuity.**

of separation, in different significations. And, as coming under the same general principle, words should be used in their most common and best-understood senses. Here the principle of propriety or fitness in the use of language aids perspicuity.

(*b.*) Attention to the relations of qualifying phrases to each other. When carelessly collocated, or too widely separated, the most absurd meanings are oftentimes produced.

(*c.*) The avoiding, as much as possible, of the extremes of ellipsis and parenthesis.\* All involved sentences, though not all long sentences, are to be avoided, if we would seek perspicuity.

(*d.*) Care not to change the construction of the sentence too abruptly, so as to lose sight of the subject or the object. This is a frequent cause of ambiguity. Especially in making comparisons and antitheses, one should avoid the use of dissimilar constructions in setting forth agreements and differences. A well-balanced comparison conduces to perspicuity of style.

(*e.*) Attention to the harmonious construction of sentences. (See remarks of Bulwer Lytton, in his "Caxtonia," Essay VIII., on "Rhythm in Prose, as conducive to Precision and Clearness.")

(*f.*) The avoiding of too learned and scientific phraseology. Were every sermon a *concio ad clerum*, this might be a merit of style, because it would be addressed to an audience that could understand it; it would be to them perspicuous; but the preacher who talks too much of "moral necessity," "cognitive faculties," "volition," "objective" and "subjective," and the like, does not preach like Him, who, even in his parables, wherein he purposely hid the truth from the unspiritual mind, used simple language. We should indeed be thought destitute

of common sense, should we preach like the opening sentence of Dr. Thomas Browne's "Essay on Christian Morals": "Tread softly and circumspectly in this funambulatory track and narrow path of goodness; pursue virtue virtuously; leaven not good actions, nor render virtues disputable. Stain not fair acts with foul intentions; maim not uprightness by halting concomitances, nor circumstantially deprave substantial goodness."

(g.) The avoidance of too subjective a style. The thought may be too subtle, inner, and transcendental for the common mind. But however deep it may be, it should be brought out of the subjective and conceptional state of one's own mind into the full birth and light of objective reality, where it can be seen and felt, so to speak, by others. There should be this simplicity, this outwardness, this distinctive form, this sensible reality in style, which makes it comprehensible and impressive to other minds; which makes it strike other minds with force.

The writings of Hume, Locke, Hobbes, Dr. Emmons, Daniel Webster, and Archbishop Whately are good models of perspicuity; and of a certain beautiful lucidness of style, of what the French call *clarté*, which the imagination makes by bodying forth its ideas in forms that shine as in noonday light. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is an eminent illustration.

We cannot find a better place than just here to say a word on *the best style for the pulpit*; because, in our estimation, it is founded especially upon this **Best style for the pulpit.** quality of perspicuity, or, in the commoner and broader term, plainness. The style of the pulpit should, above all, be a plain style. This is the basis of everything good in writing and speaking.



Let us, however, preface these remarks with a bit of homiletical history from Bishop Burnet, who himself is worthy of study for his clear, idiomatic English. He says : “ This set of men (Tillotson, Lloyd, and others) contributed more than can be well imagined to reform the way of preaching ; which among the divines of England before them was overrun with pedantry, a great mixture of quotations from fathers and ancient writers, a long opening of a text with the concordance of every word in it, and a giving all the different expositions with the grounds of them ; and the entering into some parts of controversy, and all concluding in some, but very short, practical applications, according to the subject or the occasion. This was both long and heavy, when all was pye-balled, full of many sayings of different languages. The common style of sermons was either very flat and low, or swelled up with rhetoric to a false pitch of a wrong sublime. The King had little or no literature, but true and good sense ; and had got a right notion of style ; for he was in France at a time when they were much set on reforming their language. It soon appeared that he had a true taste. So this help’d to raise the value of these men, when the King approved of the style their discourses generally ran in ; which was clear, plain, and short. They gave a short paraphrase of their text, unless where great difficulties required a more copious enlargement : But even then they cut off unnecessary shows of learning, and applied themselves to the matter, in which they opened the nature and reasons of things : so fully, and with that simplicity, that their hearers felt an instruction of another sort than had commonly been observed before. So they became very much followed : And a set of these men brought off the city in a great

measure from the prejudices they had formerly to the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

We see even by this brief narrative what is the power of a plain, comprehensible style to interest the people, and to turn the tide of public sentiment in whatever direction the speaker may choose.

As the power of the pulpit consists first of all in the presentation of truth to the mind, and impels and moves to the obedience of God through the influence of truth, the truth should meet the mind in the most direct manner. The edge of truth should not be taken off. It should smite upon the mind with all its own unmitigated force and sharpness. Nothing should come between the truth and the human heart to prevent the full power of its application. So then it is the first responsibility of the preacher to make truth plain to the understanding. This he should strive to do, to the sacrifice, if it must be, of everything else. But he really does not in this way sacrifice anything that is good, since honest plainness is the foundation of all other excellencies. Truth in art, and truth in nature, hold up everything. In the works of the greatest artists, whether of the plastic arts or of literature, there will be found a certain absolute simplicity and trueness to nature.

Nature, however plain, is never ugly, is never, even in a Dutch landscape, absolutely dull. Truth does not pall upon the taste or grow insipid. The essential element of all that is good and forcible in language, then, is unadulterated, unartificial truth, the plainness of nature and of fact. Carlyle says: “The ultimate rule is, Learn, so far as possible, to be intelligent and transparent—no notice taken of your style, but solely of what you express by it.”

An older writer of English — Dean Swift — says :

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<sup>1</sup> Burnet's “History of His Own Time.” London ed. 1724, v. i. p. 191.

“ When a man’s thoughts are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first, and his own judgment will direct him in what order to place them, so that they may be best understood.” Southey remarks, much in the same vein, that “ The readiest and plainest style is the most forcible (if the head be but properly stored) and in all ordinary cases the word which first presents itself is the best.” In regard to style, we have come to think that absolutely the first thing to care for is *the reality of things* entirely regardless of the Greek ideal of beauty. That comes as the indefinable result of knowledge and culture ; but as in religion, theories and theological ideals are of less importance than elemental truths—the spirit and the feeling and the fact that lie beneath them—so in style, the main substance of style should be real not ideal, should be the groundwork of solid truth.

This idea of style is opposed to what is commonly called *fine writing*, though not to forcible, fresh, and even brilliant writing ; whose brilliancy, however, should be more in the thought, in the imagination even it may be, than in the words. That kind of style which sacrifices the simple, the clear, the true, for what is artificial and rhetorical, in the bad sense of the term ; which strives continually to be effective, or what is called eloquent, by appealing to the outward sensibilities and fancy, rather than to the reason and the sincere feelings of the heart and the nobler imagination ; which is vulgarly startling and lacks all repose ; which allows of no pathos ; which has no trust in the simple power of the plainest statement ; which, above all, is confused and unintelligible because so constantly on the strain for smart or showy things ; this certainly is a false pulpit style.

In the sensational style, the condition of using this mode of discourse is that “ you can strike but once. The sec-

ond stroke is but a repetition or imitation." This style should appear anywhere but in the pulpit. The power and impressiveness of the great realities of religion are lost in such a highly-wrought and artificially-stimulated preaching which prevents the natural action of the hearer's own mind, and destroys its power of thought and of thoughtful receptivity.

We have lost much of our former confidence in what is called the eloquence of the pulpit. Such eloquence has ceased to have power and is not eloquent, while what is true, what is simple, what is the exact fact, what is the bare verity respecting God and the soul, the law of God, repentance, Christ and his cross, faith, the experience of the heart, its real trial, and doubt, and fear, and sin, and hope, living truth in fine, and the plain earnest thought or feeling which correlates this, is eloquent. By not seeking to be eloquent or meaning to be eloquent, a man becomes eloquent. It is the thing and not its semblance.

Let us recall what Augustine said of the style of the pulpit :

" When the preacher has to set forth great subjects he should not always speak of them in a lofty style, but modestly (*submisse*) ; when he praises or blames anything, with moderation. . . . Ought he who speaks of the Unity of the Trinity to speak in any other way than in a modest method of discussion (*submissa disputatione*), that a matter difficult to comprehend may be understood as well as possible ? Are ornaments to be sought here and not teaching ?" Again Augustine says : " It is better that the learned should find fault than that the people should not understand."

Another preacher, Antonio Vieyra, of Portugal, who is called " the last of the mediæval preachers," and who was one of the most effective though quaint preachers of any



age, having a remarkably direct, interesting, and popular style, thus discourses on the necessity of a preacher's making himself intelligible, as the first quality of good preaching ; and what he says holds good at the present day ; " Let us hear from the heavens the way in which we are to arrange our matter and our words. How ought our words to be ? Like the stars. The stars are very distinct and very clear. So should be the style of sermons, very clear and very distinct, and have no fear lest on this account it should appear low and vulgar ; the stars, clear and distinct as they are, are most lofty. Style may be very clear and very lofty ; so clear that those who are ignorant may understand it ; and so lofty that those who are wise may have much to find out in it. The countryman finds in the stars rules for his husbandry, and the mathematician for his observations and judgments. So that the countryman and the sailor who can neither read nor write, understand the stars ; and the mathematician who has read every book that was ever written, does not obtain to the complete understanding of the constellations. So a sermon might be ; stars that all can see, and very few measure.

" ' Yes, father ; but this way of preaching is not the cultivated style.' I wish it were. This unfortunate style which is nowadays the fashion, is called cultivated by those who wish to honor it, and obscure by those who condemn it. But even the latter do it too much honor. . . . Is it possible that we are Portuguese, and cannot understand what he means ? As there is a lexicon for Greek, and a Calepenas for Latin, so we want a vocabulary for the pulpit. I could wish one, at least, for proper names ; for our cultivated preachers have unbaptized the saints, and every author whom they quote is an enigma. Thus they speak of the Penitent Sceptre ;

thus of the Evangelistic Apelles ; thus of the Eagle of Africa, of the Honeycomb of Clairvaux, of the Purple of Bethlehem, of the Mouth of Gold. And this they call quoting ! They say that the Penitent Sceptre means David ; as if no other sceptre ever felt penitence ; that the Evangelistic Apelles is St. Luke ; the Honey-comb of Clairvaux, St. Bernard ; the Eagle of Africa, St. Augustine ; the Purple of Bethlehem, St. Jerome ; the Mouth of Gold, St. Chrysostom. But a man might take it another way, and think that the Purple of Bethlehem was Herod ; the Eagle of Africa, Scipio ; the Mouth of Gold, Midas. If there were an advocate who thus quoted Bartholus or Baldus, would you trust your cause in his hands ? If there were a man who thus spoke in conversation, would you not consider him a fool ? That, then, which is folly in conversation, why should it be wisdom in the pulpit ?”

We repeat this last question of the witty and yet devoted Vieyra, who, while a missionary, preached the famous “ Sermon to the Fishes ” in imitation of St. Anthony, and who had the rare art of “ getting hold of the people,” without ever descending to vulgarity ; why indeed should we use words in the pulpit essentially different from those we use in conversation, granting only the differences between a common and private and a more formal and public occasion. We say “ essentially,” for some difference there must be between the teaching and the talking styles, so far as precision and purity of language go ; and we should say that a man was a very precise and oracular person, who talked just as he would speak, with the same care in the selection of his words, the arrangement of his sentences, and the logical order of his thoughts. But the comparison holds good, nevertheless ; as a general rule the same plain, sensible, natural

language in the one is suited to the other. Learned words are to be avoided as much as possible in both cases. It shows really more skill to use simple language than bookish language, and it takes sometimes a great effort and a long discipline to be natural.

“Words in daily use but not vulgar,” is the rule ; otherwise preaching may become to the greater part of the audience what Addison was wont to call “high nonsense.” We should use idiomatic English, not altogether Saxon, but rich and composite English, instead of the glittering Ciceronian style, which is a cumbrous armor to nimble thought. This plain style, this real style, combined with naturalness and directness, with a glow and earnestness of thought, is the true one for the preacher who wishes to be understood and to do good. This is the style of the best speaking in and out of the pulpit. Let the preacher’s *thought* be clear and weighty, that is the principal thing ; but then what a real beauty it is when he is able to express such solid thought simply and naturally, so that even the ignorant person can have the benefit of it. Sometimes this cannot be done, we grant, where the subject is abstruse, but what a triumph of mind it is, when it is done !

We do not mean to say that everything in a sermon should be upon a level of everybody’s comprehension ; it was Baxter’s plan to say something in every sermon which should be a little above the ideas and thoughts of his audience, or, as his expression was, to overtop them, in order to arouse their attention and inquiry, and to lift them out of their stereotyped way of thinking. In this way he would teach them something that they did not know before. This may be done, and at the same time a preacher’s style of speaking and writing may be plain and comprehensible.

It is almost always the case that when one begins to write or to speak, he thinks that he must assume a peculiar style, that he must say a thing in a different way from what he would say the same thing were he simply talking. When he talks he is himself, when he writes or speaks he becomes an entirely different man—he is Macaulay, or Carlyle, or Wendell Phillips, or Phillips Brooks, or Dr. Hall, or Dr. Storrs, or perhaps some clergyman of note whom he is accustomed to hear, or to regard as a model. Thus reflex action must go on in his mind in order to bring him to a natural style. He must become conscious of his not being himself in his style, and then by a strong exertion of will he must come to the use of a style in which he is conscious that he is himself, and no other man; thus study, art, effort are required to enable a man to write and speak well, to acquire a good, clear, and effective style.

There are some fine points of pulpit style worthy of study in J. H. Newman's (now Cardinal Newman's) earlier preaching, as, for example, his "Plain and Parochial Sermons," to which we have before more than once referred.

J. H.  
Newman's  
style.

To adapt to our purpose and to add somewhat to the remarks of an English review concerning Newman's pulpit style, we would say of it, that there is a free and unconstrained movement in his sermons showing a very keen and exact knowledge of the subtle and refined secrets of language. With that uncared-for play and simplicity there is also a fulness, a richness, and a curious delicate music, quite instinctive and unsought for. There is also precision and sureness of expression. It is graceful with the grace of nerve and strength.

The form and the matter are connected in the sermons, as in all works of a high order, and the matter makes and



shapes the form. There is a shrinking from personal display and ornament, and the power of the great realities of religion absorbs and overcomes the human personality. He is deeply influenced by the tremendous and impenetrable vastness of that by which we are surrounded, the greatness of human life, the individuality of the soul, the mysteries of our present being. This keeps his style subdued and impersonal. He does not preach dogmatically, but calls forth what is really meant by the truths and doctrines of religion, and puts beside them the human character and its trials, as a piercing and sympathizing eye sees them. He thus preaches, though often profoundly yet so as to be understood and felt. He does not contemplate the heart in stiff and formal ways. He touches, pierces, and gets hold of the mind. There is a thorough-going reality of meaning and fulfillment in his style. There is intense conviction and directness of purpose combined with clearness, originality, and perfection on the purely literary side of preaching. He is not an orator, a declaimer, like the French preachers, but he is direct, straightforward, unconventional. There is nothing forced. It is pure thought and pure fact. There are no pomp, nor artificial solemnity, nor making-believe difficulties, no needless preliminaries, nor exaggerated statements, nor conventional pictures. His sermons do not seem to be intended to convince only, or to be simply addressed to the reason and intelligence, but to the heart and soul, with their burdens. Here he was superior to Whately and all *merely* intellectual and argumentative preachers. While there is much of refined and scholarly writing, there is plain counsel, clear setting forth of high principle, and manly encouragement to duty. There is the calm, clear, and lucid expression, strong in grasp, measured in statement, too serious to be considered in

the light of rhetorical beauty or criticism, but possessing at the same time every merit of style. It is an unconscious rather than self-conscious style.

A word in conclusion might be said here upon a *prose* style for the pulpit in contradistinction from a poetic style.

**Prose style.** A prose style is more exact, direct, pointed, and simple than a poetic style. It is also logical. There is more that is real and less that is vague in it. The poetic genius shows itself often in prose to enrich it, but the poetic diction should be banished from prose writing, though even Milton erroneously thought that it added to the force of prose writing. It should be banished excepting in highly picturesque description, or in the impassioned passages of an argument. In the best novel writing, and in descriptive essays like those of Ruskin and Taine on subjects of art, and perhaps very rarely in oratory, the feeling, the rhythm, and the picturesque vividness of poetic expression may be allowed, but there is generally no surer evidence of a weak or vicious prose style than a tendency to indulge in poetic diction which runs almost at times into poetic metre, which seeks the flowing period, which abounds in florid metaphor, which loves exaggeration and intense expression, which indulges in alliteration and such artificial tricks, and which, to sum up all, makes use of ambitious and stilted language.

Sometimes a young writer thinks it to be the perfection of good writing to use these uncommon words, and fears lest people may put him down as commonplace, or as no deep thinker, or scholar, if he uses words such as are commonly employed among well-speaking men and women. He supposes that those unusual forms of speech are proofs of elegant literary culture, when precisely the opposite is true, and they are generally the sign of crudeness and of

an unformed taste. The beauty of style is to have good thoughts, it may be uncommon and powerful thoughts, and to express them in a clear and natural way, though, as we have said before, there may be exceptions to this rule. Genius, it is said, has no rules. But, above all, let us have the genuine article, let us not have the semblance, the counterfeit. Be real, even if you express yourselves in a rude and awkward manner. A man in homespun is better than a manikin in broadcloth with a fortune of jeweller's rings and gold chains suspended from his insignificant person. In these remarks we would not lose sight of the capabilities of our language to express fine shades of meaning, warm colorings of sentiment and more nice and unusual elaborations of thought, springing from deeper and more hidden qualities of mind than the plain logical understanding. Still, the language which is expressive even of poetical and imaginative thought should remain the language of prose. Some writers like Jeremy Taylor and De Quincey have given us prose poems.

But in the sermon the imagination should show itself in a general vitalizing, or idealizing, graphic power, rather than in a florid, over-wrought and highly metaphorical style.

Hear what an old English writer says: "It would be fit that some time be spent in learning rhetoric or oratory, to the intent that upon all occasions you may express yourself with eloquence and grace; for, as it is not enough for a man to have a diamond unless it is polished and cut into its due angles, whereby it may the better transmit and vibrate its native lustre and rays, so it will not be sufficient for a man to have a great understanding in all matters unless the understanding be not only polished and clear, but under-

set and holpen a little with those figures, tropes, and colors which rhetoric affords, where there is use of persuasion. I can by no means yet commend an affected eloquence, there being nothing so pedantic, or indeed that would give more suspicion that the truth is not intended, than to use overmuch the forms prescribed in schools.

“It is well said by them that there are two parts of eloquence necessary and commendable ; one is, to speak hard things plainly, so that when a knotty or intricate business, having no method or coherence in its parts, shall be presented, it will be a singular part of oratory to take those parts asunder, set them together aptly, and so exhibit them to the understanding.

“And this part of rhetoric I much commend to everybody, there being no true use of speech but to make things clear, perspicuous, and manifest, which otherwise would be perplexed, doubtful, and obscure.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Johnson, himself a conspicuous violator of plain simplicity (though unnecessarily so, for he could write clear, terse English when he chose), has also spoken of a style which meets the common demands of everyday life in its business and professions, very much to the same point. He says : “There is in every nation a style which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so consonant to the analogy and principles of its respective language, as to remain settled and unaltered. This style is to be sought in the common intercourse of life among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition or elegance. The polite are always catching modish innovations, and the learned forsake the vulgar, when the vulgar is right ; but

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Lord Herbert, “Autobiography.”



there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides."

(5.) Energy. This is sometimes called "strength," sometimes "effect," sometimes "nerve," and sometimes "vividness" of style; but **Energy.** the old Aristotelian word *Ἑνέργεια* expresses it best. It is, without doubt, the most important quality of style, without which all the others are of little account. It springs from profounder spiritual sources within the man than even perspicuity, and belongs to that force of nature, thought, and character, that are peculiarly personal. If the preacher of God's salvation shows no energy in his speech, he had better hold the plough or stand behind the counter all his life.

Energy is that quality which gives a sense of power in the speaker and in the truth which he speaks, and thus forces attention to the subject in hand, and stamps it upon the mind of the hearer. The **Definition of energy.** great source of energy of style is energy of feeling and energy of thought. Strong thought makes a strong style. Energy is, above all, a subjective quality, but it is ultimately, in the preacher, the power of feeling and expressing divine truth, so that the energy of the preacher of divine truth may be said in a true sense to come from God himself.

"He who can speak well," Luther said, "is a man." Energy in style is the product of a vigorous and well-trained mind. And the state of the mind at the time of writing is an important consideration—the interest felt in the subject, the vivid conception of the theme, and the strength of purpose and of aim. As we have said, strong thought will make a strong style. A trumpet blast cannot come out of a reed, even though, as Pascal says, it is "a reed that thinks." There must be the energy of soul

before energy of expression. Yet, although there must be this original force of mind for great energy of style, there are certain legitimate rhetorical helps to the production of that great and noble quality. The speech of the pulpit should be, above all, energetic.

The means of attaining energy of style may be divided into two : The fit use of words, and the figurative use of words.

**Means of attaining energy of style—fit use of words.** 1. The fit use of words. Generally speaking, this is an observance of all the other properties of language and style which have been mentioned, fusing them together by the

heat and power of a strong purpose ; but, more definitely, it consists of three particulars—the kind, number, and arrangement of words in sentences.

(1) Kind or choice of words.

(a.) The use of short Saxon words. The energy of Carlyle's style arises chiefly from his use of rugged Saxon words, some of them so old as to be new. Macaulay also often exemplifies this : " You must dig deep if you would

build high." Herbert Spencer, in his " Essay on Style," has some interesting remarks on the use of Saxon words, as economizing strength and time, thus adding force, or, as his expression is, " economizing the recipient's attention." In fact, the great source of power in style, according to Spencer, is economy of words.<sup>1</sup>

(b.) The use of specific instead of generic words. The latter may be often necessary, but the former give vividness. Dr. Campbell says, " The more general the terms are, the picture is fainter ; the more special they are, the brighter." " Rome fell," is more forcible than " The

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<sup>1</sup> " Essays," pp. 12-15.

Roman empire came to an end." "The beauty that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome," might be generalized and weakened. The use of specific instead of abstract words saves the hearer the delay of thinking what the abstract term signifies, and thus conduces to rapidity and energy of impression. As a general maxim of style, therefore, concrete words are better than abstract.

(c.) The use of words whose sound corresponds to their sense, thus giving a more vivid force, and helping the hearer to catch the thought through the sense as well as through the reason.

(d.) The use of common and natural, instead of technical, words. The theological style contains stereotyped words and phrases which diminish energy and promote dullness, because they sound too familiar to some persons and too abstruse to others. Religious ideas, ideas clothed in fresh, simple, and natural words, seem like new truth, and have great power and attraction for the popular mind. Any suggestion of the artificial indicates weakness. Thus too much antithesis tends to produce a cold style. You hear the first statement, which is put into an antithetic form, and you wait in a critical state of mind to hear the corresponding sentence. It is a purely intellectual process. Macaulay's style may dazzle the mind, but it does not often touch the heart; for men are jealous of the appearance of art.

## (2) Number of words.

It is a general principle that brevity gives strength.

"*Si gravis, brevis.*" The utmost conciseness

consistent with clearness promotes energy.

Too many connectives, expletives, and qual-

ificatives weaken style; those are better fitted for a

Number  
of words.

descriptive than an oratorical style. "The orator," says Quintilian, "cannot use goldsmith's scales."

To have, or to seem to have, a fine command of language—"a flow of words"—is the temptation of young writers; but after a thought is once sufficiently expressed, everything added weakens the sentence, though there may be a little more of diffuseness allowed in oral than in written language. Conciseness is violated by all tautological and circumlocutory phrases. Sentences should be recast until those enfeebling redundancies disappear. And the same may be said in regard to thoughts. "In the choice of competent ideas, or in the choice of expressions, the aim must be to convey the greatest amount of thoughts with the smallest quantity of words."<sup>1</sup>

We would here quote a suggestive passage from a modern English author on the proper style for the orator, in contradistinction from that of the writer or essayist :

"The genius of oratory is more irregular and abrupt; it is akin to that of the drama, inasmuch as it does not address men one by one, each in his quiet study, but as a miscellaneous audience, which requires to be kept always verging toward that point at which attention relieves its pressure by the vent of involuntary applause. To move numbers simultaneously collected the passions appealed to must be those which all men have most in common; the arguments addressed to reason must be those which, however new or embellished, can be as quickly comprehended by men of plain sense as by refined casuists and meditative scholars. Elaborate though Cicero's orations are, they are markedly distinct in style from his philosophical prelections. The essayist quietly

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer's "Essays," p. 35.



affirms a proposition ; the orator vehemently asks a question. 'You say so and so,' observes the essayist about to refute an opponent. 'Do you mean to tell us so and so?' demands the impassioned orator. The writer asserts that 'the excesses of Catiline became at last insupportable even to the patience of the senate.' 'How long will you abuse our patience, Catiline?' exclaims the orator. And an orator who could venture to commence an exordium with a burst so audaciously abrupt, needs no other proof to convince a practical public speaker how absolute must have been his command over his audience. What sympathy in them, and what discipline of voice, manner, countenance in himself, were essential for the successful license of so fiery a burst into the solemnity of formal impeachment !

"Oratory, like the drama, abhors lengthiness ; like the drama, it must keep *doing*. It avoids as frigid, prolonged metaphysical soliloquy. Beauties themselves, if they delay or distract the effect which is the great end of oratory, should be disregarded."

### (3) Arrangement of words.

This is an important point in respect of energy of style. The Greek and Latin languages, through the variety of their inflections, are remarkable for the energy attained by the simple arrangement of words in sentences. That is often a key to their significance.

The forcible arrangement of a sentence is promoted—

(a.) By a regard to the preservation of its unity. However manifold the form of the parts, there should be no doubt, from the clear arrangement of the sentence, what is the main idea, what is the unifying thought. That is

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<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's "Caxtonia," p. 94.

not to be broken up ; for “ nothing broken,” it has been well said, “ can be projected with the force of a whole body.”

(b.) By the periodic structure of the sentence. A periodic structure is one in which the important thought or word of the sentence is reserved for its close. It is opposed to a loose construction, in which the sentence ends in a straggling way, or with one or more dependent clauses. Whately's definition of a periodic sentence is, “ A period is a complex sentence in which the meaning remains suspended till the whole is finished.” The idea is, that the sentence should end with a blow which clinches the whole, and binds it forcibly together. That is conducive, also, to the clear and forcible delivery of a sentence, leaving nothing fragmentary, nothing to be gathered up by the voice ; it is, in homely phrase, pulling up short with little or no decrease of momentum. Sometimes a sentence may be made to have a periodic structure by simply reversing the order of its clauses. As a general rule, the weakest words and clauses should come in the middle, the strongest at the beginning, but, above all, at the close. The general statement should precede the particular, the less striking that which is more so, the less concentrated and intense that which is more so. On this subject of the arrangement of words in a sentence, and of thoughts in style, we would refer the student to Herbert Spencer's “ Essay on Style.”

(c.) By the use of a direct mode of expression. In a direct style, the adjective comes before the substantive, the predicate before the subject, the qualificative before the qualified part of the sentence. Oratory should go straight to the point. It demands the avoidance of a form of sentence where the mind is held long in suspense. It is better to break up the thought into short sentences,

and to approach the meaning by a series of approximations. Where there is, however, in one sentence, a great number of preliminaries to be attended to before the main subject or idea is arrived at, or when the sentence is quite complex, one should judiciously mingle the two, bringing in the main idea before the close of the sentence, but yet after the mention of several preliminaries. This is mingling the direct and indirect styles. In oratory, one should not fatigue attention, or strain the mind of the hearer to too great an effort to catch the meaning of the speaker. The thought and the expression should be as near together and as direct as possible ; for oratory does not allow tediously circuitous phrases, but is bold, direct, impetuous, massive, brief.

(*d.*) By a judicious use of antithesis. Tacitus among the ancients, and Macaulay among modern writers, are masters of antithesis. The antithetical arrangement of a sentence gives a more vivid view of the subjects contrasted. It shows different sides, and they reflect light on one another. The relaxed attention in regard to one side of the antithesis gives the mind renewed power to view and appreciate the other side.<sup>1</sup> There may be an affected antithesis, which, with all its brilliancy, soon palls, as in most of the modern French writers. In fact, variety in writing, alternations of light and shade, new combinations of words, contrasted ideas, the picturesque and bold breaking up of sentences, and all means of averting dullness and monotony, increase the force of style. Surprise is an element of strength as well as beauty.

(*c.*) By the use of the climax. Sentences should not decrease in strength, although sometimes a long paragraph may have a softening or a letting down toward the close ;

<sup>1</sup> Vinet's "Homiletics," p. 390.

but in a categorical succession, the strongest word and the strongest thought should come last. Yet sometimes a primitive force is added to an old word that has lost its original value, by using it climactically. Nature itself dictates the climax ; the storm gradually rises to its full strength. Cicero among the ancients, Robert Hall among the moderns, make a fine use of the climax. By too frequent and uniform a use of the climax, however, the style loses power ; and it is only at considerable intervals that the fullest effect of the climax can be realized.

2. The imaginative or uncommon use of words. We have discussed the fit use of words ; we will now glance at

**Imaginative  
use of  
words.** the imaginative use of words, for the promotion of strength of style. The use of figurative language, we have seen, may often

increase perspicuity ; its judicious use may even in a greater degree promote energy of style, by taking words and thoughts out of their common, plain, and logical forms, and holding them up in the living aspects which the imagination imparts to them. The imagination is awaked by feeling. Its presence, therefore, when natural and free, implies a certain living energy ; it fills words with a new sense. Not to speak of the moral uses of the imagination which lend vividness to preaching, imaginative energy of language, rhetorically considered, may express itself—

(a.) In the trope. A trope is when there is some unmistakable resemblance between the thing and what it signifies ; as “ sword ” for “ war.” There

**The trope.** is no mistaking the essential identity of the two. Resemblance is, indeed, the general principle which runs through and governs all figurative language. The trope is the simplest kind of figure. Many single words, thus used tropically at first, have lost their figurative sense,



and thereby their first energy ; but such tropical words as "firmament," "imagination," "melancholy," "express," "detect," "bridle" (as a verb), "fine-spun," "rivet" (as a verb), "insult" (to leap on a fallen foe), were very forcible at first. Words may be also used figuratively in a less direct and simple sense, as in synecdoche and metonymy, by which, often, great effectiveness is produced. They help to give a rapid, picturesque, distinct impression, bringing in the eye, the sense, to aid the understanding, and thus economizing time. The author of "Sartor Resartus" says in his oddly humoristic but suggestive way, "Language is called the Garment of Thought ; however, it should rather be, Language is the Flesh-garment, the Body, of Thought. I said that imagination wove this Flesh-garment ; and does not she ? Metaphors are her stuff ; examine Language ; what if you except some few primitive elements of natural sounds, what is it all but Metaphors recognized as such, or no longer recognized, still fluid and florid, or now solid-grown and colorless ? If those same primitive elements are the osseous fixtures in the Flesh-Garment, Language—then are Metaphors its muscles and tissues and living integuments. An unmetaphorical style you shall in vain seek for ; is not your very Attention a Stretching to ? The difference lies here : some styles are lean, adust, even the muscle itself seems osseous ; some are even quite pallid, hunger-bitten, and dead-looking ; while others, again, glow in the flush of health and vigorous self-growth."

(b.) In the metaphor. A metaphor is where there is a resemblance or similarity in some *relation* rather than property, which presents to the mind something analogous between the object signified and that which is expressed ; as in the common phrase, "a mountain wave." Whately prefers, as

The  
metaphor.

a general rule, the use of the metaphor to that of the "simile" in oratory, because it has greater brevity, and, moreover, it permits the hearer to make out the resemblance for himself, which is pleasing, and, at the same time, it aids rapidity. His words are, "All men are more gratified at catching the resemblance for themselves than in having it pointed out to them." If this be true, the metaphor should not be too dark or obscure, and it should be something naturally and immediately suggested.

(c.) In the simile, allegory, personification, etc. The simile, unlike the metaphor, makes the object represented the principal thing for the time being ; it makes it stand out in its full proportions ; the allegory, it draws the resemblance out into all its personification, minute details of analogy or identity. etc.

Although sometimes difficult to distinguish from the metaphor, it is generally a more elaborate figure, a more complete analogy, than the metaphor, and it is needed when the comparison is one that necessarily has many parts, and cannot, therefore, be immediately suggested to the mind. A mingling of the metaphor and the simile may be often used with effect, where the brevity of the metaphor may be joined with the picture-like elaborateness of the simile.<sup>1</sup> As to the order in which the language of metaphor and simile should be introduced for the highest effect, these figures should generally precede the thing illustrated by them. The figure should come before the introduction of the idea which is set forth by it. By its light first kindled, the object is thus brought out more vividly, which is the almost invariable order in the Scriptures, in the figurative language of

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<sup>1</sup> See Spencer's "Essays," p. 32.

Proverbs, the elaborate types and illustrations of the prophecies, and, above all, in the parables of our Lord. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him, for he refresheth the soul of his master." How much this would lose, if the order were reversed to read, "A faithful messenger refresheth the soul of his master, as the cold of snow in the time of harvest"! In the order of the last sentence, the attention becomes partly interested in the thought itself of the refreshment of a faithful messenger to the soul; but it is a duller attention or interest than if the thought should come after the striking simile or metaphor that has just awakened an interest in it.

But we cannot dwell upon these familiar rhetorical distinctions, or upon the novel uses which imagination makes of language; suffice it that the imagination throws new life into language; it brings distant objects face to face; it searches out hidden resemblances; it makes the past and the future stand before the mind as a present reality. Dr. Chalmers' imagination was shown not so much in the use of figures as in this general vivification of his style. In his illustrations he made use of the simile rather than the metaphor, and his illustrations were generally drawn from nature, or the natural sciences. There is a noble and extended simile given in Hanna's "Life of Chalmers," vol. iii., p. 299. The simile, also, at the close of the sermon, "On the Expulsive Power of a New Affection," is very beautiful. There is a fine simile in Huxley's "Lay Sermons" (App. ed., p. 31), drawn from the chess-player. This is a strong and natural figure of Paolo Sequese, a preacher of the seventeenth century, "When a tree is cut down, on what side does it fall? It falls on the side to which it leans. Leaning to the right, it then falls to the right; leaning to the left, it then falls to the

left. These evil livers always incline to the left ; and yet when they are to be cut down, they put in a claim to fall to the right as good men fall. No measure of grace would suffice to accomplish this for them, excepting one which, like a violent hurricane, should, with miraculous force, shove them to the opposite side."

The entire absence of all figurative energy of style is a marked defect. The imagination clothes the dry bones of thought with flesh and blood and lends to style a strong and realistic quality. It is one great source of invention, and of that *freshness* which is so great a beauty, and which generally makes the difference between the dry and the interesting speaker. "The Protestant pulpit has too much neglected imagery in diction ; it has been iconoclastic in this, as in everything. It has not attempted a flowery style, the most contemptible of all ; it has tried to set forth thought, which is not superfluous for any, but is, above all, useful to the least instructed. But images of speech fasten the idea in the memory by a golden nail. These must not be confounded with the loose and fallacious analogies of certain preachers who make a reason of a comparison."<sup>1</sup> The imagination should supply an inward refining, purifying, organizing, spiritualizing light and heat, rather than be suffered to break out into too many startling figures of speech. "Van der Palm's eloquence was grafted on the decapitated trunk of poetry. From this art (poetry-making) he quickly withdrew, with the conviction that its cultivation would be prejudicial to eloquence. To this he consecrated all his powers, with the sacrifice of poetry, in which he had already gained some distinction. Still it was doubtless of importance to his prose that he had passed through this poetic school.

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<sup>1</sup> Vinet's "Histoire de la Prédication."



As regards euphony it was valuable, and on the interpretation of the Bible he said, 'Had I never felt the fire kindled within me, had I been an entire stranger to the language of ecstasy (poetry), I should never have ventured on the translation of such a book as Isaiah.'''<sup>1</sup> The style of Demosthenes had little of the figurative, but much of this idealizing power of the imagination. Above all, in speaking, the figurative use of language should not degenerate into the poetical style of writing. Robert Hall said, "I am tormented with the desire of preaching better than I can. I like to see a pretty child or pretty flower, but in a sermon prettiness is out of place. To my ear it would be anything but commendation should it be said to me, 'You have given a pretty sermon.' If I were upon trial for my life, and my advocate should amuse the jury with his tropes and figures, burying his argument beneath a profusion of the flowers of rhetoric, I would say to him, 'Tut, man, you care more for your vanity than for my hanging. Put yourself in my place; speak in view of the gallows, and you will tell your story plainly and earnestly.' I have no objection to a lady's winding a sword with ribbons and studding it with roses when she presents it to her lover; but in the day of battle he will tear away the ornaments, and use the naked edge to the enemy."

If one use figures, let them be, 1. One's own, and fresh.  
 2. Not far-fetched. 3. Common, but not trite or vulgar.  
 4. Strong, chaste, manly, natural, not fine  
 and elaborate; they should not be drawn  
 from anything artificial, like dress or up-  
 holstery.<sup>2</sup> 5. Suited to the nature of the subject. 6.

Qualities of  
 figures.

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Van der Palm," p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Quintilian's "Institut.," B. viii. c. iii. sec. 6.

One figure to one subject, and not the mixture of two or more figures in the same sentence, or very near together.

Nature and the natural sciences afford the richest field for illustrations. It would be indeed desirable to have more of the fresh influences of nature in our arid sermons, more of the breath of blossoming clover fields, more of the rustling of autumn corn, more of cheery, blessed sunshine, of the singing of birds, even of the dash of the stormy sea lifting up its hoarse anthem. This would be, we believe, true praise to Christ, by and through whom all these beautiful and glorious things were made, and who, when he walked the earth, communed with God in nature as well as in spirit. As a general rule, young writers and preachers need not be urged to the use of figurative language, but rather, perhaps, restrained from it; yet it is better to be in exuberance in a young writer than to be absent altogether; for it may be trained into an element of strength.

A word might be said upon *pathos*, which is a true though mild form of energy of style, and which is partly the product of the imagination, and partly

**Pathos.** of the feelings, and without which a sermon is often powerless. Modern preaching—highly intellectual and brilliant—too often lacks tenderness; few preachers have the element or power of pathos; and perhaps it is true that “a high civilization supersedes the more primitive emotions.” But after all the ridicule and contempt cast upon feeling (richly deserved when the feeling is false) it is better to have a spring where the heart is, a spring capable of gushing at the time of freshet, than to have a cannon-ball or a brickbat. Christ had a human heart, and so should his preachers have. Strong and tender have been words fitly applied to the most heroic men and sternest fighters the world has ever

seen. Pathos is like water from the smitten rock. It is not pathos if it come from a weak source. It would have no moving and affecting quality in it. Pathos springs from tender feeling, or from a suggestion that awakes tender feeling. It is produced by bringing up objects that excite our compassion, pity, love—that touch the deep springs of feeling.

The theory of a modern essayist is an interesting one—that some touch of the past which imagination brings up is always needed for pathos ; some comparison between former happiness and present pain. The office of pathos is certainly to overpower the degrading sense of petty personal cares and of present momentary annoyances, with the blending of thoughts of greater power and depth. Something of the irrevocable—of loss which cannot be restored—enters into all pathos, and sets the sorrows and vexations of the hour at their right level ; and even a slight severance, if it be forever—when it is said of a rivulet,

“ No more by thee my steps shall be,  
Forever and forever,”—

that is enough for pathos. The smallest act performed for the last time awakes the pathetic sense.<sup>1</sup> Pathos, whether treating of the past or the present, is a sudden and timely utterance, which gives vent to the feelings, and a relief to sad thoughts ; and tears, if they spring from an inner fountain, sometimes refresh and do good to a hardened heart. This power can be cultivated in the preacher only by keeping his own heart open, his sympathies warm and free ; by not suffering the emotional part of his nature to be frozen up by the keen, cold breath of the intellect, or by the hard realities of life. Scotch preachers, rugged as their style often is, are sometimes

<sup>1</sup> “ Essays on Social Subjects.”

pathetic preachers, because their hearts are warm. Pathos always speaks in simple language—the language of nature and of children ; a natural metaphor, a homely illustration, a story related in the plainest way, is enough, often, to touch the deep spring of feeling in the heart. The greatest natures have generally the most power of pathos. Luther's illustration of faith by the little bird singing on the spray, under the great arch of heaven, without care, because his heavenly Father feedeth him, is but a reproduction of the affecting beauty of our Saviour's own words. How touching are the simple words in Genesis, "And there I buried Leah!" The pathetic may not be often drawn upon, certainly not in one sermon, or there is thus a waste of feeling, and a greater difficulty in its reproduction ; and it hardly need be added, the attempt at pathos, where it is not genuine, is ever a failure, and deserves to be. Augustine, who had bursts of mighty feeling and passion, but not so often of pathos, speaking in one place of his mother in a most affecting manner, says of her : "She was the mother of a godless son. She bewailed me as one dead—carrying me forth upon the bier of her thoughts, that thou mightest say to the son of the widow, 'Young man, I say unto thee arise ;' and he should arise, and begin to speak, and thou shouldst deliver him to his mother."

In concluding these comments upon energy of style, we would say that after the best rules have been given,

<p><b>Energy the result of the action of all the powers fired by a great purpose.</b></p>	<p>there is something deeper still in the man himself ; and energy is no factitious acquirement, but is the result of the action of all the powers of the nature set in motion by what Dr. Brown would call that <i>τὶ θερμὸν</i>—that "fiery particle"—that original energy of soul which is beyond and beneath all. Pericles, chiefly</p>
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from this quality, was called "the Olympian." His general style is described by critics as harsh and abrupt, "seeming like one who dealt thunderbolts from the clouds." Thucydides says of him, "He controlled the multitude with an independent spirit, and was not led by them so much as himself led them; for he did not say anything to humor them, but was able, by the strength of his character, to contradict them, even at the risk of their displeasure. Whenever, for instance, he perceived them unreasonable, or insolently confident, by his language he would dash them down to alarm; and, on the other hand, when they were unreasonably alarmed he would raise them again to confidence." Thus his force was in himself, rather than in what he said. His style, as Thucydides again said, was not made so much to be admired as to endure. There is marvellous condensation in his language—no fine-spun thoughts, but great thoughts plainly and briefly expressed.

His celebrated "funeral oration" is, however, from the nature of the theme, more free from this abruptness than his other addresses to the people, and has more of elegant finish, order, and unity. It is full of noble sentiment "of the unwritten laws of noble conduct." He says in one portion of it, "He who confers a favor is the stronger friend, since by kindness he seeks to keep alive a feeling of obligation in the receiver, while the receiver knows that he returns the favor not in the way of a free gift, but in the way of discharging a debt." In this oration occurs the lofty and familiar apostrophe, "For of illustrious men the whole earth is the sepulchre, signalized not alone by the inscription of the column in their native land, but in lands not their own, by the unwritten memory which dwells in every man, of the spirit more than the deed."

Energy in a speaker comes from a strong will, acting on a strong intellect, when both of them are moved by a strong emotion. No man can be a great preacher without great feeling. All comes at last to this :

“ Gefühl ist alles.”<sup>1</sup>

It is said of John Wesley, a man of iron self-control ; of calm, even cold, temperament ; that sometimes, in preaching, his heart was mightily stirred, and then the myriads before him felt a power that bowed them. He says of himself, on one occasion, “ In the midst of a mob I called for a chair ; the sounds were hushed and all was calm and still ; my heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed, they were ashamed, they were melted down, they devoured every word.” It is no superficial feeling of which we speak, but one which springs from the moral and religious affections—from the higher nature going out in its passionate yearning and desires toward the infinite and the immortal, and going out toward the good of men in their immortal interests. It is that feeling which grasps divine things and God himself better than pure knowledge does.

But how is this profound spiritual emotion excited ? We answer, by some real belief, some strong and all-absorbing realization of the object under discussion and which makes it a living truth to the mind. Therefore, for one to be an energetic preacher, he must be a man of strong faith—of faith which fills him and moves him more than any present object of mind or sense. Confidence in the truth awakens energy, passion, imagination, all the great forces of the soul. The love of Christ, the intense realization of the truth of this love, of the work of re-

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<sup>1</sup> “ Faust.”

demption which Christ wrought by his sufferings and death for the world, and the need which every man has of this salvation, gave Paul his energy. That constrained him to speak and to act. Zeal for the righteousness of God, and wrath against those who pervert the truth, inspired Luther with energy. "Luther used to assign a very characteristic and unique cause for the effectiveness of his sermons and writing. I have no better work, he said, than anger (*zorn*) and zeal; for if I wish to compose, or write, or pray, or preach well, I must be angry (*zornig*). Then all the blood in my veins is stirred, my understanding is sharpened, and all dismal thoughts and temptations are dissipated. No doubt a noble moral indignation this against all meanness and evil. But even what we usually call temper often gives great energy. Swift's rage was malignant; Luther's noble. Something personal—even literary egotism, as in Gibbon, or some individuality, as in Hawthorne—promotes energy of style."<sup>1</sup>

Baxter said he preached as "a dying man to dying men;" but there was probably no sign of dying or failing strength in such preaching. It was full of life and power. He was possessed by the truth, and that made him powerful.

What a preacher South would have been if he had had the spirituality and Christ-like earnestness of Baxter! Saurin was a preacher of great energy of style. He abounds in interrogations, in passionate address, in bold and fiery passages that seem to flame out of his heart. Dr. Beecher's style was a noble example of energy; this is illustrated in his famous temperance sermons.

"Soft words, smooth prophecies, are doubtless well;  
But to rebuke the age's popular crimes,  
We need the souls of fire, the hearts of that old time."

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<sup>1</sup> London *Spectator*.

After all that has been said, let it not be supposed that any mere rhetorical art can produce real energy of style—above all, in the preacher. To hold the truth, as the truth holds us, in entire and all-absorbing mastery—this alone will make us strong preachers. Earnestness is the soul of eloquence. He who feels makes others feel. The man who so loves freedom that he is willing to give his life for it, is the man to speak for the cause of freedom with power. He casts rhetoricians behind his back. The preacher who is filled with the sense of the eternal truths which he preaches, so that they are as real to him as his life, and infinitely more important—he is the man to reason of righteousness and judgment to come. He who, though not seeing, yet believes in the unseen

<p><b>The chief source of energy in the preacher.</b></p>	<p>Christ, who loves him more than any other object—he is the one to speak of the love of Christ so that the rocky heart shall melt. <i>Faith which worketh by love</i> is really the chief source of energy in the Christian preacher.</p>
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He who speaks because he believes, will not deal in weak arguments or flowers of rhetoric. He has something more earnest in his speech than that.

John Bunyan said, "It pleased me nothing to see people drink in opinions, if they seemed ignorant of Jesus Christ and the worth of their own salvation."<sup>1</sup> That feeling fired his preaching, and gave it its intense individualizing and awakening power.

For the promotion of energy of style, we would recommend, first of all, the study of the Bible. It does not play with words. In its realness, directness, and power, it has an earnestness like nature. In breadth, boldness, and sublimity of imagery and thought, it is, indeed, like the

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<sup>1</sup> Philip's "Life of Bunyan," p. 257.



vast and tameless sea and has in it a "sound as of many waters." One also may invigorate his style by the study of the "Iliad," of the "Divina Commedia" of Dante, and of Shakespeare among the poets; of Milton's prose, Dr. South, Junius' Letters, Carlyle, Motley—the last chiefly, however, in the picturesque and dramatic character of his writing; but in all these, and in many more that might be named, there is the *vivida vis animi* which makes a strong style.

(6.) Elegance. Elegance of style is that quality by which thought is expressed in a way that appeals to good taste. We have spoken of it incidentally under the head of the principle of "Taste in Preaching." It seeks to realize the ideal of beauty, and its chief elements are propriety, right sentiment, and grace.

Definition  
of elegance.

It does not altogether lie in the language, but in the thought; for it is the expression of a refined mind. Elegance is not inconsistent with energy of style, since the beauty of the works of nature often adds to, instead of taking from, their power. It is a common observation that there is almost as much beauty as grandeur in Niagara. True elegance is doing without whatever weakens style, all false ornament, and everything contrary to good taste. Demosthenes' style was at once strong and elegant.

The sources of elegance of style, and the means of its attainment, are—

(a.) Fineness of perception. This, of course, is, for the most part, a native gift, but may be greatly developed and improved by cultivation. Such a true perception unconsciously avoids all thoughts and expressions that offend good taste. The highest degree of elegance comes from the severest mental culture.

Sources  
of elegance.

(b.) A careful avoiding of false ornament. It is an altogether erroneous idea that elegance consists in ornament ; it may sometimes consist in avoiding it. It is, more truly speaking, ornament of the right kind and in the right place—the assemblage or union of things that harmonize. A Corinthian capital would look misplaced on a Doric column. “ Whatever is improper cannot embellish.”<sup>1</sup> Ornament which is inexpressive and overloaded, which does not help, but encumbers, the thought, takes from elegance ; for no ornament is good which is not in some way useful. The ornamental drapery of nature, even to the smallest leaf, serves some genuine purpose. We meet in nature with no senseless or useless things. Everything contributes to some vital object. So, in style, ornament is not an end, but a means : it imparts force to this truth ; it brings that subject more into the light ; it softens the severity of that line of argumentation ; it clothes the nakedness of that bare fact. It is itself intended to suggest thought and to aid thought, not merely to attract and amuse, and by no means to take the place of more solid qualities of style. The elaborate work and ornament on a cannon may be admitted to relieve the stern character of the instrument ; but in war, the best ornament is to have the piece well polished and in good condition to send the ball. In any ornament we may employ, let us ask ourselves, Does this increase the effect of my sermon ? Does it aid the thought ? If not, reject it. As we have before hinted, there is no such curse to a writer as the desire of fine writing. It clings to one worse than the robe of Nessus, and it must be given up at any sacrifice. And, lastly, in relation to ornament, let it always be remembered that

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<sup>1</sup> Quintilian's “ Institut.,” B. viii. c. iii. s. 15.

there must be strength in order to sustain ornament ; there must be the brazen column to bear the carved work and adornment upon it. The old Greeks, in their criticism of art, clearly distinguished between what was merely ornamental and what was really beautiful.

(c.) A careful choice of fit words.

(d.) Precise thinking. Precision is a great help to elegance of style, which delights in sharply-cut and clearly-defined lines. There may be a certain sublimity in vague thought, but elegance requires clear and distinct thought.

(e.) Methodical arrangement. Of this faculty of method a modern writer thus speaks : " The more we examine the higher orders of intellect, whether devoted to science, to art, or even to action, the more clearly we shall observe the presence of a faculty common to all such orders of intellect, because essential to completion in each—a faculty which seems so far intuitive or innate (*ingenium*), that, though study and practice perfect it, they do not suffice to bestow the faculty of grouping into order and symmetrical form ideas in themselves scattered and dissimilar. This is the faculty of method ; and though every one who possesses it is not necessarily a great man, yet every great man must possess it in a very superior degree, whether he be a poet, a philosopher, a statesman, a general ; for every great man exhibits the talent for organization or construction, whether it be manifested in a poem, a philosophical system, a policy, or a strategy. And without method there is no organization or construction. But in art, method is less perceptible than in science, and, in familiar language, usually receives some other name. Nevertheless, we include the meaning when we speak of the composition of a picture, the arrangement of an oration, the plan of a poem. Art employs method for the symmetrical formation of beauty,

as science employs it for logical exposition of truth ; but the mechanical process is, in the last, ever kept visibly distinct, while in the first it escapes from sight amid the shows of color and the curves of grace.”

(*f.*) Harmonious arrangement. The sentences should be such as flow easily from the tongue—such as are euphonious. The ear must aid the style.

(*g.*) The study of beauty in nature and art.

There is a caution to be observed in striving after elegance of style. Vinet remarks in his “*Homiletics*” (p. 470), “The preacher, in order to be elegant, must have recourse to practice ; and another and much greater effort will be necessary not to appear so. Elegance which announces itself, elegance which shows itself, is unskillful and unhappy ; but chaste elegance is appropriate to the pulpit.” Whately also has an admirable remark on this point (*Rhetoric, Style, chap. iii., part iii.*) : “The safest rule is, never, during the act of composition, to study elegance, or think about it at all. Let an author study the best models, mark their beauties of style, and dwell upon them, that he may insensibly catch the habit of expressing himself with elegance ; and when he has completed any composition, he may revise it, and cautiously alter any passage that is awkward and harsh, as well as those that are feeble and obscure ; but let him never, while writing, think of any beauties of style, but content himself with such as may occur spontaneously. He should carefully study perspicuity as he goes along ; he may also, though more cautiously, aim in like manner at energy ; but if he is endeavoring after elegance, he will hardly fail to betray the endeavor ; and in proportion as he does this, he will be so far from giving pleasure to good judges that he will offend more than by the rudest simplicity.”



SEC. 35. *Conclusion.*

In the numerous classifications of style which have been under discussion, we have spoken of each at the time as valuable ; but, after all, they are features of one style, variations of one chord ; for all the good qualities of style should appear in a man's speaking—all varieties of the thoughtful, the euphonious, the pure, the precise, the perspicuous, the energetic, the elegant, the plain, the direct, the profound—even as his needs and his feelings are. It is just this noble variety, this mastery of all the chords, which shows the true orator. The orator should indeed know all things ; but the preacher should have something more than knowledge, even a wisdom that comes from above.

**All good  
qualities of  
style should  
appear in  
every sermon.**

Let us call to mind what was said at the beginning of these lectures upon Sacred Rhetoric, that rhetoric, oratory, and style should ever be studied psychologically, and with reference to the nature of the mind and the powers and requirements of the soul ; that we should never separate rhetoric from man, or from the speaker himself, and those whom he addresses. It should not be disconnected from the great end of preaching—which is personal—the salvation and instruction of souls in Christ. If it be thus abstractly treated, it becomes a pedantic study, dry as the dust of the summer threshing-floor. But in rhetorical studies we, as ministers of Christ, should be ever approximating to a fit and perfect expression of Him who is the truth, who is the true Word of God ; and only when the inspiration of His eternal Spirit fills our minds is there a vital element in speech, an energy, a beauty, and a converting power, which transcend all

human eloquence. Have confidence in your work. Preach the word courageously, hopefully, manfully. But even if you preach it in human weakness, humility, and tears, yet with a loving and believing heart, you shall reap in joy.

# INDEX.

## A

Action, in the orator, 667.  
 Æsthetics, its principles to be regarded in preaching, 615, *et seq.*  
 Alexander, Dr. J. W., 276, 688.  
 Alexander of Hales, 140.  
 Allegorical preaching, 59.  
 Ambrose, Bp. of Milan, 103.  
 American pulpit, 226, *et seq.*  
     early preachers of the, 226.  
     product of the character and history of the people, 230.  
     possessed sound learning, 230.  
     characteristics of the, 232.  
 Ammon, "*Handbuch der Einleitung zur Kanzelberedsamkeit*," 4.  
 Amyraud, Mos., 185.  
 Analogy, the argument from, 576.  
 Analysis, the method of, 567.  
     grammatical, 732.  
 Anselm, 117, 133, 140.  
 Anthony, St., of Padua, 117, 134.  
 Apollos, 550, *et seq.*  
 Apostles, preaching of the, 35, *et seq.*  
 Aquinas, Thomas, 133, 140.  
 Argumentative development of the sermon, 408, *et seq.*  
 Aristotle, "Treatise on Rhetoric," 1.  
     his conception of rhetoric, 527, *et seq.*

Arnold, Dr. Thomas, 221.  
     on "Interpretation," 251, 325.  
     character of his preaching, 419.  
 Arnold, Matthew, on the critical power, 638.  
 Art, its early manifestation in Christian preaching, 68.  
     in the composition of sermons, 468.  
     why disregarded in the primitive church, 619.  
 Ascham, Roger, his rule of language, 612.  
 Athanasius, as a preacher, 80.  
     his rebuke of preachers of his time, 115.  
 Atterbury, Bp., 206.  
 Augustine, his view of the ministry, xvii.  
     sermons of, 5.  
     as a preacher, 105, *et seq.*  
     his main homiletical precepts, 106, *et seq.*  
     his style, 110.  
     an extempore preacher, 111.  
     number of his sermons, 112.  
     his introductions, 347.  
     his treatise, "*De Apto et Pulchro*," 629.

## B

Bacon, Lord, 597, 745.  
 Barrow, Isaac, the sermons of, 3.  
     as a preacher, 193.

- on the "Power of the Tongue," 586.
- Basil, as a preacher, 81.
- Bautain, on extempore speaking, 4, 516, 517, 519.
- Baxter, Richard, sermons of, 3.  
as a preacher, 199.  
quoted, 438, 767.
- Bede, Venerable, 117.
- Beecher, Dr. Lyman, as a preacher, 236.
- Bernard, St., of Clairvaux, as a preacher, 131, 139.
- Bersier, 188.
- Bible, the English, its influence upon the English language, 609.  
to be studied for the invigoration of style, 792.
- Binney, Thomas, 3, 221.
- Biographical sermon, 405.
- Blair, Dr. Hugh, as a preacher, 206.
- Boileau, quoted, 427.
- Borromeo, Carlo, 153.
- Bossuet, sermons of, 4.  
as a preacher, 186.
- Bourdaloue, sermons of, 4.  
as a preacher, 188.  
upon a plan, 283.
- British pulpit, 189, *et seq.*  
its golden age, 189.
- Brooks, Phillips, 3.
- Brougham, Lord, 285.  
his letter to Zachary Macaulay, 748.
- Bruyère, 750.
- Bunyan, John, a lay-preacher, xxvi.  
sermons of, 3.  
as a preacher, 202, *et seq.*  
quoted, 792.
- Burke, Edmund, 641.
- Burnet, Bp., quoted, 482, 747, 761.
- Bushnell, Horace, sermons of, 3.  
his power as a preacher, 468.  
his use of written sermons, 481.  
upon pulpit power, 545.  
his use of language, 589.  
his beauty of thought, 631.  
his originality, 680.
- Butler, Bp., sermons of, 3.  
his argument from analogy, 577.  
quoted, 755.

## C

- Caird, Dr. John, 221.
- Calvin, as a preacher, 149.
- Campbell, Dr. George, "Philosophy of Rhetoric," 2.
- Candlish, Dr., 221.
- "Cant" and "Slang," 743, 744.
- Carlyle, Thomas, 596, 599, 612, 735, 781.
- Chalmers, Dr., sermons of, 3.  
as a preacher, 216, *et seq.*  
on delivery of sermons, 488.  
failure as extempore preacher, 499.  
use of barbarous words, 594.  
his imagination, 630.  
as a preacher of practical morality, 693.
- Channing, Dr., sermons of, 3.  
as an ethical preacher, 241.
- Charnock, on reason, 565.
- Chaucer, the study of, 603.
- Christ, regarded as a preacher, xxxiii.  
the preaching of Christ historically considered, 27, *et seq.*  
he did not prescribe the form of preaching, 32.  
the theme and end of preaching, 258.  
the moral beauty of Christ's preaching, 617.
- Christlieb, Dr. Immanuel, on memorizing a sermon, 493.
- Chrysostom, his idea of the ministry, xvii.  
sermons of, 5.



- as a preacher, 90, *et seq.*  
 number and range of homilies, 91.  
 oratorical gifts, 95.  
 moral element in his preaching, 96.  
 style, 97.  
 composition and form of his sermons, 99.  
 a popular preacher, 101.  
 considered that preaching was "to please God," 544.  
 his imagination and use of illustrations, 627.  
 Church edifices, 60.  
 Cicero, "*De Oratore*," 1.  
   his description of eloquence, 254, 546.  
   on writing as an aid to speaking, 485.  
   his conception of rhetoric, 531.  
   on the community of the arts, 634.  
   his cultivation of the voice, 658.  
   on action in the orator, 669.  
   on the style of the orator, 728.  
 Clarke, Dr. Samuel, 205.  
 Classification of sermons, according to their treatment and form, 444, *et seq.*  
   according to their method of delivery, 479, *et seq.*  
 Claude, Jean, "Essay on the composition of a sermon," 3.  
   sermons of, 4.  
   as a preacher, 178, *et seq.*  
 Clement of Alexandria, 55.  
 Clement of Rome, 46, 49, 53.  
 Coleridge, his definition of reason, 562.  
   on the English Bible, 611.  
   his definition of imagination, 624.  
 Conclusion of a sermon, 427, *et seq.*  
   advantages of a good, 428.  
   different parts of the, 430.  
   stereotyped forms of appeal in the, 441.  
 Controversy, sometimes inevitable, 575, 689.  
 Coquerel, Athanase, "*Observations pratiques sur la Prédication*," 3.  
   on the peroration, 434.  
   on pulpit oratory, 480.  
   his requisites of an extempore preacher, 502.  
   on the benefits of friendly criticism, 646, *et seq.*  
 Cotton, John, 230.  
 Cousin, Victor, 617, 620.  
 Cowles, "*Hebrew History*," 21.  
 Critic, qualities of the true, 637.  
 Criticism, rhetorical, 635, *et seq.*  
   of sermons, 645.  
 Cyprian, 77.
- D**
- Daillé, Jean, 185.  
   "*Traites de l'Eglise de l'Empire des saints pères*," 315.  
 Damiani, St. Peter, 133.  
 Darwinism, 472.  
 Davies, Samuel, 241.  
 Day, Prof. H. N., "Rhetoric," 3.  
   quoted, 352, 623, 652, 720.  
 Delivery of a sermon, the deepest sources of a good, 653.  
   spiritual qualities of, 655.  
 Demosthenes, his moral power as an orator, 539.  
   probably a memoriter speaker, 491.  
 De Pressensé, 4, 35, 47, 188.  
 De Quincey, Thomas, 2, 753.  
 De Quincy, Quatremère, 613.  
 De Ravignan, 188, 254, 271.  
 Development of a sermon, 398, *et seq.*  
   what decides the, 398.  
   expository, 399.  
   illustrative, 403.

argumentative, 408.  
 persuasive, 422.  
 the qualities of a true, 423.  
 Difficulties of preaching, 261, *et seq.*  
 Distinction between κληρος and λαός,  
 51.  
 Division of a sermon, 380, *et seq.*  
   influenced by character of sermon, 381.  
   the utility of, 383.  
   number of divisions, 385.  
   sources and qualities of divisions, 387.  
   order and arrangement of divisions, 394.  
 Doctrine, Christian, 687.  
 Doddridge, Philip, 3, 205.  
 Donne, Dr., 190.  
 Du Bosc, Pierre, 185.  
 Du Moulin, 177.  
 Dwight, Dr., 3, 227.

### E

Edwards, Jonathan, sermons of, 3.  
   as a preacher, 228, 494, 570.  
   "The Nature of True Virtue,"  
   615.  
 Elegance of style, the sources of,  
 793.  
 Eliot, John, the "Apostle to the Indians," 226.  
 Elocution, 652, *et seq.*  
 Eloquence, its relation to rhetoric,  
 534.  
   definition of, 534, *et seq.*  
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 614, 625.  
 Emmons, Dr., sermons of, 3.  
   as a preacher, 234, 452.  
   his introductions, 336.  
 Emotions, preaching to the, 270, *et seq.*  
 Emphasis, 665.  
 Energy of style, 773, *et seq.*  
   means of attaining, 774.  
   the result of the action of all  
   the powers, 788.

what the chief source of energy  
 in the preacher, 792.  
 English literature, the preacher's  
 familiarity with, 594.  
 its great epochs, 597.  
 English philology, 600, *et seq.*  
 Erasmus, 154, 395.  
 Erckhardt, 118.  
 Euphony, 725.  
 Evidences, the Christian, preaching  
 upon the, 689.  
 Experience, Christian, as a subject  
 of preaching, 718.  
 Explanation of a sermon, 353, *et seq.*  
   the materials and sources of,  
   359.  
   the qualities of, 365.  
 Exposition of a sermon, 356.  
 Expository preaching, 399.  
   two kinds of expository sermons, 399.  
   reasons of ill success in, 448.  
 Extempore preaching, 497, *et seq.*  
   the ancient method, 498.  
   the definition of, 508.  
   the advantages of, 509.  
   practical suggestions in regard  
   to, 515.

### F

Faith, the true preaching power,  
 544.  
 Faucheur, Michel, introduction of  
 a sermon by, 350.  
 Faults of preaching, 266, *et seq.*  
 Fénélon, "Dialogues on Eloquence," 3.  
   sermons of, 4.  
   as a preacher, 188.  
 Figures of speech, rules for, 785.  
 Fine writing, criticised, 763.  
 Finney, Dr., 500.  
 Fitch, Dr. Eleazer T., his conception  
 of a sermon, 450.  
 Form of the sermon, 464.

Foster, John, 212, 256.  
 Francis, St., of Assisi, 139.  
 Francke, 155.  
 Freeman, E. A., "History of the Norman Conquest," 601.  
 French pulpit, 170, *et seq.*  
 preachers of the Reformed, 172, *et seq.*  
 Frobisher, "Voice and Action," 660.  
 Froude, 142.  
 Fuller, Andrew, 212.  
 Fuller, Thomas, 460.

## G

German pulpit, 154, *et seq.*  
 the characteristics of the, 156.  
 Goethe, 606, 627, 634, 790.  
 Gospel, as the subject of Christian preaching, 32.  
 Gould, Edward, "Good English," 661.  
 Gregory of Nyssa, 89.  
 Gregory Nazianzen, 85.  
 Guthrie, Dr. Thomas, 221, 493

## H

Hagenbach, Dr., "*Liturgik und Homiletik*," 4.  
 quoted, 155, 508.  
 Hall, Dr. John, 523.  
 Hall, Robert, sermons of, 3.  
 on the ministry, 14.  
 as a preacher, 213, *et seq.*  
 his method of making a sermon, 279.  
 Hamilton, Sir William, xxiv, 577, 578.  
 Hare, Archdeacon, 221.  
 Harmony of style, 727.  
 Harms, Claus, testimony in regard to use of texts, 296.  
 Hase, on Chrysostom, 95.  
 Henke, 4, 441.  
 Herbert, Edward, Lord, on style, 772.

Hermeneutics, Biblical, 302.  
 Hervey, G. W., "Christian Rhetoric," 3.  
 Hilarius, 103.  
 Hill, A. S., 3.  
 Hippolytus, 76.  
 Historical sermon, 404.  
 History of preaching, 13, *et seq.*  
 the richest and the most barren ages in the, 18.  
 lessons to be drawn from the, 241.  
 Homilies, the earliest, 8.  
 Homiletics, its literature, 1.  
 defined, 9.  
 Homily, defined, 6.  
 Hooker, Richard, as a preacher, 190.  
 Hopkins, Dr. Samuel, 494.  
 Horace, "*De Arte Poetica*," 1.  
 Howe, John, sermons of, 3.  
 as a preacher, 198, 628.  
 Howson, Dean, 35.  
 Hyacinthe, Père, 188.

## I

Ideal sermon, 426.  
 Illustrative development of sermon, 403.  
 Illustrations, their use in preaching, 405.  
 Imagery, Protestant pulpit deficient in, 784.  
 Imagination, the use of by preachers, 624.  
 moral uses of the, 625.  
 Intellectual element, not to be lost from preaching, 453.  
 Interpretation, the groundwork of true preaching, 114, 248, 320.  
 of the Old Testament, 325.  
 Introduction of a sermon, 334, *et seq.*  
 defined, 338.  
 the necessity of, 339.  
 the objects to be gained by, 341.  
 the qualities of a good, 344.

- the sources of introductions, 350.  
 Irving, Edward, 221, 275, 628.  
 Itinerant preaching friars, 117.

**J**

- Jerome, 103.  
 Johnson, Dr., on action, 667.  
     on style, 772.  
 Judaism, its relations to Christian preaching, 26.

**K**

- Kidder, "Treatise on Homiletics," 3, 392.  
 Kingsley, Charles, 221.  
 Klein, "*Die Beredsamkeit des Geistlichen*," 4.  
 Krummacher, 155.

**L**

- Lacordaire, 4.  
 Language, the study of by the preacher, 583, *et seq.*  
     origin and definition of, 584.  
     grammatical properties of, 730.  
 Latimer, Hugh, sermons of, 3.  
     as a preacher, 151, 579.  
 Law, the relations of the Law to the Gospel, 703, *et seq.*  
     the preaching of the, 714.  
 Lay-preaching, xxvi.  
 Lecky, "History of European Morals," 26, 696.  
 Le Faucheur, Michel, 185, 350.  
 Leighton, Abp., sermons of, 3.  
     referred to, 747.  
 Lentz, "*Geschichte der Christlichen Homiletik*," 4.  
 Liberal religion, its influence upon preaching, 240.  
 Liddon, Canon, sermons of, 3, 221.  
 Literary power in sermons, 468.  
 Logic, in the pulpit, 456, *et seq.*, 570, 581.

- Luther, on being ordained a preacher, xxxii.  
 the sermons of, 4.  
 upon Paul's preaching, 37.  
 his learning and acquisitions, 143.  
 the Reformation carried on chiefly by his preaching, 144.  
 form of his sermons, 146.  
 his homiletics, 154.  
 his advice to young preachers, 276.  
 on bringing a sermon to an end, 428.  
 his conclusions, 440.  
 his vehement action, 667.  
 his praise of good speaking, 773.  
 unique source of his energy, 791.

**M**

- Macaulay, his antithetic style, 779.  
 Marheinecke, "*Grundlage der Homiletik*," 4.  
 Marsh, "English Language and Early Literature," 593, 595, 607.  
 Mason, Dr., his remarks on expository preaching, 403.  
 Massillon, sermons of, 4.  
     as a preacher, 187.  
     quoted, 525.  
 Masson, Prof., his classification of English literature, 597.  
 Mather, Cotton, 231.  
 Maurice, F. D., xxxiii.; 221, 682.  
 Maury, l'Abbé, "*Essai sur l'éloquence de la chaire*," 3, 367.  
 Mayhew, Jonathan, 227.  
 McCheyne, 221, 253.  
 McIlvaine, on elocution, 503, 653, 658, 665, 668.  
 McLeod, Norman, 221.  
 Mediæval preaching, the characteristics of, 134, *et seq.*  
 Melancthon, 144, 154.  
 Melville, Henry, 3, 221.



Memoriter sermons, 491, *et seq.*  
 Merivale, on Augustine, 111.  
 Mestrezat, Jean, 185.  
 Metaphor, the use of, 781.  
 Metaphysical sermon, 446.  
 Metaphysics, xxiii., 454.  
 Michelet, 143, 145.  
 Mill, John Stuart, 475, 682, 734.  
 Ministry, the Christian not given  
     to angels, xvii.  
 Monod, Jean, 3, 648.  
 Moore, "Thoughts on Preaching,"  
     3, 10, 289, 658.  
 Morality, Christian, 691, *et seq.*  
 Moral reform, the preaching on, 702,  
     *et seq.*  
 Moral truth, the preacher's relations  
     to, xxvi.  
 Mosheim, 3, 155.  
 Moule, "Christian Oratory," 4, 113.  
 Mozley, Canon, 3, 221.  
 Müller, Jul., 4, 156.  
 Müller, Max, 5, 590.  
 Mullois, l'Abbé, 662.

## N

Natural theology, 690.  
 Neale, "Mediæval Preaching," 4,  
     137.  
 Neander, quoted, xvii, xxvii.  
     on the choice of presbyters, 46.  
     on Tertullian, 56.  
     on the preaching of the third,  
         fourth, and fifth centuries, 70.  
     on reading the Scriptures, 83.  
     on Gregory Nazianzen, 85.  
     his remarks upon Chrysostom,  
         94, 95, 544.  
 Niedner, "*Lehrbuch der Christlichen  
     Kirchen Gesch.*," 96.  
 Newman, J. H., sermons of, 3, 221.  
     his introductions, 338.  
     his style, 768.  
 Newton, John, 205.  
 Nitzsch, 4, 155.

## O

Oberlin, xxx.  
 Object of preaching, 243, *et seq.*  
 Oratory, demands the direct style,  
     778.  
 Origen, his influence on preaching,  
     59.  
     as a preacher, 72.  
     his threefold method of inter-  
         pretation, 75.  
 Originality, in what it consists, 679,  
     *et seq.*  
 Ornament in writing, should be of  
     a vital or organic kind, 794.  
 Otto, "*Ev. Prak. Theologie*," 6, 355.

## P

Palmer, "*Ev. Homiletik*," 4, 292.  
 Paniel, "*Geschichte der Christlichen  
     Beredsamkeit*," v. i., 19, 27, 44,  
     56, 61, 64, 75, 80, 92.  
 Parables, the treatment of, 331.  
 Park, Prof. Edwards A., 169, 236.  
 Parker, Theodore, 241.  
 Pathos, 786.  
 Patristic period, as a field of homi-  
     letical study, 113.  
 Patteson, John Coleridge, 256.  
 Paul the apostle, the preaching of,  
     37.  
     emphatically the preacher  
         among the apostles, 40.  
     his reasoning, 459, 571.  
     his recognition of the æsthetic  
         principle of "propriety," 617.  
 Pericles, referred to, 744.  
     his style as an orator, 788.  
 Persuasion, the element of in preach-  
     ing, 252, 578.  
     the motives of, 416, *et seq.*  
 Persuasive development of a ser-  
     mon, 413.  
 Perspicuity of style, 756, *et seq.*  
     how violated, 757.  
     means of attaining, 758.  
     models of, 760.

- Peter, the apostle, the preaching of,  
36.
- Plan of a sermon, its true place  
and object, 283.  
a general plan in preaching,  
476.
- Plato, his conception of rhetoric,  
530.  
mental idea of beauty, 620.
- Political preaching, 699.
- Postils, 116.
- Preacher, an ambassador of God,  
xv.  
his authority, xx.  
the results of his work, xxix.  
his distinction from the plat-  
form-speaker, 550.
- Preaching, the greatness of the work  
of, xv.  
defined, 9.  
the different scriptural terms  
for, 9.  
an expression of the spirit of  
an age, 13.  
the permanent and the variable  
elements of, 14.  
what would be required in the  
history of, 17.  
pre-apostolic, 19.  
not the main instrumentality of  
the Old Dispensation, 24.  
of Christ and of the apostles,  
27, *et seq.*  
rise of the institution of preach-  
ing in the apostolic church,  
40.  
the historic head-springs of, 42.  
the office of in the early church,  
45.  
its influence on the first period  
of Christianity, 47.  
the three kinds of preaching in  
the early church, 49.  
of the third, fourth, and fifth  
centuries, 58, *et seq.*  
of the Reformation, 150.
- of the later Reformed churches,  
152.  
ethical preaching, 691, 697.  
political, 699.  
of the law, 703.  
the true preaching of the gos-  
pel, 716.
- Precision of style; how violated,  
751.
- Prescott, William, 722, 747.
- Propheying, 42.  
Origen's idea of its continuing  
in the church, 62.
- Prophet, of Old Testament, 20.  
schools of the prophets, 20.  
meaning of, 22.
- Proposition of a sermon, 368, *et seq.*  
place of the, 369.  
significance of the, 371.  
substance and matter of the,  
373.  
the structure and qualities of  
the, 376.
- Propriety of style, 749.
- Pulpit, the best style for the, 760,  
*et seq.*
- Purity of style, 740.  
how violated, 741.  
how preserved, 746.
- Q**
- Quackenbos, "Rhetoric," 612.
- Quintilian, "Institutes," 1.  
upon the coming orator, 480.  
on oratorical memory, 491.  
his conception of rhetoric, 531.  
the relative influence of learn-  
ing and nature in the orator,  
549.  
on imitation, 559.  
the character of Quintilian's  
work on rhetoric, 560.  
on the voice, 663.  
on the use of artificial figures,  
785.  
his classification of style, 794.

**R**

- Reasoning, its uses to the preacher,  
561, *et seq.*  
cautions in the use of, 580.
- Reed, Henry, 611.
- Reinhard, 4, 155.  
his preference of memoriter  
preaching, 493.
- Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 621.
- Rhetoric, defined, 526.  
ancient ideas of, 527.  
modern ideas of, 532.  
something more than mere  
skill, 546.  
the uses and sources of, 546.  
objections to the study of an-  
swered, 547.
- Ripley, "Sacred Rhetoric," 2.
- Robertson, F. W., his characteris-  
tics as a preacher, 221.  
his introductions, 336.  
his conclusions, 436.
- Ruskin, 614, 634.

**S**

- Saurin, sermons of, 4.  
as a preacher, 170.
- Savonarola, as a preacher, 124, *et seq.*  
his so-called prophetic gift,  
129.
- Schaff, Dr., 112.
- Schiller, 457, 616, 629.
- Schleiermacher, sermons of, 4, 155.  
as a preacher, 157.  
an ethical preacher, 163.  
an extempore preacher, 164.  
his plans of sermons, 377.
- Schott, "*Theorie der Beredsamkeit*,"  
4.
- Science, an aid to the preacher,  
362.  
in the pulpit, 471.
- Scriptures, reading of the, 664.
- Sensational preaching, 269, 572.
- Sermon, defined, 11.  
length of, 274.  
hints for composing, 280.  
against repeating old sermons,  
490.
- Shakespeare, his uses to the preach-  
er, 604.  
quoted, 250, 500, 608.  
his language, 608.
- Shedd, Dr., 3, 277.
- Shepard, Prof., on written sermons,  
485.
- Sherlock, Dean, 206.
- Simile, employment of the, 783.
- "Simplicity," this term how used  
in the scriptures, 549.
- Skinner, Dr. Thomas, upon a spirit-  
ual delivery, 671.
- "Slang," 743.
- Smith, Sydney, 483, 486.
- Socrates, an oral teacher, 24.
- South, Robert, sermons of, 3.  
quoted, xxii., xxiii., xxv.  
as a preacher, 190.  
his introductions, 335.  
as a moral reasoner, 458.
- Speaking with tongues, 42.
- Spener, 155.
- Spencer, Herbert, 2, 696, 776, 782.
- Spurgeon, Charles, 221, 276.
- Stanley, Dean, 221.
- Stiebitz, "*Gesch. der Predigt*," 4.
- Stier, Rudolph, "*Grundriss einer  
Bib. Keryktik*," 4.  
sermons of, 156.
- Stiles, Ezra, 227.
- Storrs, R. S., upon extempore  
preaching, 506.
- Style, defined, 720.  
absolute properties of, 724, *et seq.*  
relative properties of, 733, *et seq.*  
subjective qualities of, 734.  
the significance of, 734.  
individuality of, 737.

- objective qualities of, 739, *et seq.*  
 a prose in contradistinction from a poetic, 770.  
 Subject, qualities of the true, 677.  
 Suso, Henry, 118.  
 Sympathy, the element of in preaching, 161.
- T**
- Taine, Henri, 600.  
 Taste, in preaching, 612.  
   the principles of, 628.  
   how to cultivate the, 633.  
 Tauler, the preaching of, 118.  
 Taylor, Jeremy, sermons of, 3.  
   as a preacher, 194.  
   his imagination, 627.  
 Taylor, Dr. Nathaniel, 241, 451.  
 Tertullian, as a preacher, 55.  
 Text, defined, 288.  
   objections to the use of, 290.  
   design and advantages of the use of, 294.  
   principles to guide in the choice of, 297, *et seq.*  
   an accommodated, 314.  
   practical suggestions for the handling and interpretation of texts, 320, *et seq.*  
   the classification of texts, 321.  
 Textual sermon, defined, 464.  
 Textual and topical sermons compared, 465.  
 Theology dependent on philosophy, xxiv.  
   the study of, indispensable to the preacher, 451.  
 Theological sermon, 449.  
 Theremin, his conception of rhetoric, 538.  
   his theory that eloquence is a virtue, 540.  
   upon eloquence in its relation to taste, 623.  
 Tholuck, sermons of, 4.  
   as a preacher, 167, *et seq.*  
   plan of a sermon, 377.
- Tillotson, Abp., 3, 482.  
 Tongues, the gift of, 42.  
 Trench, Dean, 5.  
 Truth, to be clearly presented, 581.  
   Christian truth the subject of preaching, 684, *et seq.*
- U**
- Ueberweg, the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, 562.  
 Upham, "Interior Life," 552.
- V**
- Van der Palm, 153.  
 Van Oosterzee, 6, 455.  
 Variety in preaching, 477.  
 Vieyra, Antonio, upon style in preaching, 764.  
 Vinet, Alexandre, on the true mysticism, xxvii.  
   definition of "sermon," 11.  
   on the use of texts, 290.  
   on the unity of the text, 329.  
   quoted, 443, 784, 796.  
 Voice, the cultivation of the, 657.
- W**
- Ware, Henry, "Hints on extemporaneous speaking," 2.  
   quoted, 507, 510.  
 Wayland, Dr., 582.  
 Wesley, John, sermons of, 3.  
   as a preacher, 207, *et seq.*, 790.  
 Whately, Abp., "Elements of Rhetoric," 2.  
   his caution as to classing texts together, 303.  
   his conception of rhetoric, 538, 556.  
   his views of elocution, 656.  
   his definition of a periodic sentence, 778.



- his counsel in regard to style, Wyclif, John, sermons of, 3.  
 796. as a preacher, 119.
- White, Richard Grant, 638, 731,  
 743.
- Whitefield, as a preacher, 210.
- Whitney, W. D., 586.
- Whittier, 210.
- Williams, Roger, 227.
- Woolsey, T. D., 712.
- Worship, the first assemblies for  
 Christian worship, 41.
- Written sermons, 481, *et seq.*
- Zincke, his method of extempore  
 preaching, 2, 504.
- Zollikoffer, 4, 155.
- Zwingli, 4, 150.

## Y

Young, "Christ in history," 686.

## Z

61

1802









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